

# RADIOGRAPHY OF ATTACKS ON CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANIZATIONS AND HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDERS IN THE REPUBLIC OF MOLDOVA

1 JANUARY – 31 DECEMBER 2022







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# **RADIOGRAPHY OF ATTACKS ON CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANIZATIONS AND HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDERS IN THE REPUBLIC OF MOLDOVA**

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## INTRODUCTION

Radiography of Attacks on Civil Society Organizations and Human Rights Defenders in the Republic of Moldova is a joint effort to document the information and events that deteriorate the working environment of civil society organizations (CSOs) in Moldova. The radiography is in its 4<sup>th</sup> edition and covers the period of 1 January – 31 December 2022. Similar analyses were produced for the period of 2016 – 2017,<sup>1</sup> as well as for 2018<sup>2</sup> and 2019.<sup>3</sup>

For the purposes of this document, attacks mean in particular the statements and actions of politicians, the publication of media articles, or public interventions that “present nonprofits as organizations that promote the interests of foreign countries, serve the interests of political parties, or waste millions on useless reforms”. Sometimes they take the form of legislative initiatives aimed at worsening the working environment for CSOs, intimidation through conventional sanctions, or violent actions committed by protesters.

The importance of monitoring and documenting these attacks is determined by the fact that increasingly more independent CSOs become the target of many discrediting and denigrating actions, especially after they supported the reform processes promoted by the current government or after their members took public offices. The purpose of the document is to draw attention to orchestrated attacks on CSOs and to make public authorities, companies, and individuals behind these actions stop them and let CSOs do their job unhindered. Another purpose of this document is to enable CSOs to respond to attacks on them.

The radiography for 2022 documents both attacks on civil society and the reactions of national CSOs to them. The information included in the document was obtained from online media sources and social networks. The monitoring and documentation of attacks took place throughout 2022. The monitoring does not pretend to be exhaustive. The attacks are described in chronological order, starting from January 2022. Some of the attacks are grouped in blocks, depending on their object (for example, attacks during the protests organized by the “Șor”

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<sup>1</sup> Radiography of Attacks against Nongovernmental Organizations from the Republic of Moldova, September 2016 – December 2017, available at [https://crjm.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/02/2018-02-21\\_radiografia-atac-ONGs\\_fin.pdf](https://crjm.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/02/2018-02-21_radiografia-atac-ONGs_fin.pdf)

<sup>2</sup> Radiography of Attacks against Nongovernmental Organizations from the Republic of Moldova, 1 January – 31 December 2018, available at [http://crjm.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/03/2019-03-19-timeline-atac-OSC\\_2018\\_final.pdf](http://crjm.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/03/2019-03-19-timeline-atac-OSC_2018_final.pdf)

<sup>3</sup> Radiography of Attacks against Nongovernmental Organizations from the Republic of Moldova, 1 January – 31 December 2019, available at <https://old.crjm.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/07/2020-05-13-Timeline-attacks-CSOs-RO.pdf>

Party) or subject (derogatory articles about certain CSOs). The document includes references to the websites that published the examined materials. Some links are no longer active, but the authors of the document have evidence of the publication of these materials.

The phenomenon of attacks on civil society is not an isolated problem, specific to the Republic of Moldova. It is already a trend in the countries of the southeastern region of Europe, where democracy is fragile. The methods and tools used for this become increasingly sophisticated and widespread.<sup>4</sup> One of the many negative consequences of these actions is the self-administered censorship and low engagement among CSOs and civic activists.<sup>5</sup> Judging from the experience of other states in the region, the stigmatization of CSOs can be a precursor to persecutory actions by the state.<sup>6</sup> The initiative of documenting and monitoring attacks is inspired by Hungary, whose community sector has faced similar challenges for several years. This document was prepared and presented by the signatory organizations, which cooperated to collect data. They are shown at the end of the document.

If you know a case that qualifies as an attack on CSOs, you can report it to [oxana.brighidin@crjm.org](mailto:oxana.brighidin@crjm.org) so it will be included in the next monitoring report.

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<sup>4</sup> Balfour R., Bouchet N., policy paper: Supporting Civil Society in Eastern Europe and the Western Balkans: Old and New Challenges, 2018, GMF Europe Program, available at <http://www.gmfus.org/publications/supporting-civil-societyeastern-europe-and-western-balkans-old-and-new-challenges>.

<sup>5</sup> Amnesty International, Laws designed to silence: the global crackdown on civil society organizations (2019) ACT 30/9647/2019, p. 2, available at <https://www.amnesty.org/download/Documents/ACT3096472019ENGLISH.PDF>.

<sup>6</sup> Buyse A., Squeezing civic space: restrictions on civil society organizations and the linkages with human rights, 2018, The International Journal of Human Rights, 22:8, p. 966-988, available at <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/13642987.2018.1492916>.

## SUMMARY OF KEY FINDINGS CONCERNING ATTACKS IN 2022

Attacks on CSOs in 2022 were fewer than in previous years. This may be due to major political changes following the parliamentary election of 11 July 2021, when for the first time, a center-right pro-European Action and Solidarity Party (PAS), obtained a majority of 63 seats in Parliament. 2022 was also strongly marked by the invasion of Ukraine by the Russian Federation on 24 February, the ensuing economic and social impact of the war, and the award of the status of EU accession candidate to the Republic of Moldova on 23 June.<sup>7</sup> As a result, many CSOs have expanded their goals and activities to adapt to the crisis of Ukrainian refugees and the new requirements imposed by the EU to advance in the accession process.

The attacks recorded during this period were closely related to the justice reform launched by the current government and targeted CSOs that promoted or were actively involved in this reform. They centered especially around certain events, such as the protests organized by the “Șor” Party against the government in the center of the capital city, the Moldova Pride Festival of the Moldovan LGBT+ community, assaults on investigative journalists who exposed alleged cases of corruption involving former dignitaries and politicians, or the persecution of inconvenient journalists through the use of defamation provisions of the Contravention Code, amendments proposed by authorities to the Law on Access to Information and the Law on the Prevention and Combating of Terrorism in the part concerning the definition of effective beneficial owner for nonprofits, hasty decrees of the Commission for Exceptional Situations (CES), the appointment of civil society representatives to public positions, etc. These events sparked an avalanche of attacks on CSOs with the use of such tactics for denigrating their work as accusations that it is in the interest of the parliamentary majority or Western countries or that the foreign financing of NGOs limits the country's sovereignty.

Several CSOs were the direct target of attacks in 2022, including the Institute for European Policies and Reforms (IPRE), the Legal Resources Centre from Moldova (LRCM), Promo-LEX

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<sup>7</sup> European Council Conclusions on Ukraine, the membership applications of Ukraine, the Republic of Moldova and Georgia, Western Balkans and external relations, 23 June 2022 <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/press/press-releases/2022/06/23/european-council-conclusions-on-ukraine-the-membership-applications-of-ukraine-the-republic-of-moldova-and-georgia-western-balkans-and-external-relations-23-june-2022/>.

Association, Pilgrim-Demo Association, the Independent Journalism Center (CJI), CU SENS media project, RISE Moldova, the Association of Independent Press (API), and the Soros Foundation – Moldova (SFM). IPRE and the LRCM were attacked by bloggers, media portals with questionable reputation, and some representatives of liberal professions because of the justice reform and the pre-vetting process, being accused that they were loyal to the government. IPRE was accused that it worked for political espionage rather than pursued its statutory goals, and the LRCM – that some of its former members sat in the Pre-Vetting Commission and the Independent Anticorruption Advisory Committee to the President of the Republic of Moldova. As for the SFM, several web portals with questionable reputation published fake information that the organization's funds had been used improperly for political interests. Pilgrim-Demo Association was attacked by pro-Kremlin journalists, members of the People's Assembly of Gagauzia (PAG), and their affiliates.

Following the Russian invasion of Ukraine on 24 February 2022,<sup>8</sup> the Commission for Exceptional Situations (CES) was empowered by Parliament's decision on the declaration of a state of emergency to issue decrees that limited certain fundamental rights, including the right to freedom of peaceful assembly and the right to freedom of expression. In October 2022, the CES banned assemblies<sup>9</sup> that blocked traffic during business days and assigned the police an exclusive role in the legal procedures for stopping and dispersing assemblies. Previously, in June 2022, the Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) proposed for consultation a draft law to amend the Meetings Act, which provided for similar restrictions. The MHA's draft bill prohibited meetings held within less than ten meters of the offices of diplomatic missions and state institutions, introduced an authorization procedure for meetings organized along the frontier, and provided for other measures that were incompatible with international standards concerning freedom of assembly. Following criticism from CSOs, the MHA dropped the draft bill.

Additionally, by Decree of 16 December 2022, the CES suspended the broadcasting licenses of six TV stations for the state of emergency "due to lack of correct information in covering national events and the war in Ukraine." The CES adopted this decision by derogating from Article 84 (10) of the Audiovisual Media Services Code, which stipulates that the broadcasting license may be suspended only after the application of other sanctions and the recurrence of violations, as well as from the provisions of the Civil Procedure Code, according to which licenses may be suspended only by courts of law. In response, on 20 December 2022, several nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) issued a statement,<sup>10</sup> demanding that all factual circumstances and concrete arguments underlying the CES' decision to suspend the broadcasting right of the six TV stations be made public.<sup>11</sup>

Just as in previous years, authorities tried to use legislative measures to limit room for action for civil society. The proposals to amend the Law on Access to Information, approved by the Government on 4 May 2022,<sup>12</sup> were a serious encroachment on the right of access to official

<sup>8</sup> Parliament Decision 41 of 24 February 2022 regarding the declaration of the state of emergency [https://www.legis.md/cautare/getResults?doc\\_id=130079&lang=ro](https://www.legis.md/cautare/getResults?doc_id=130079&lang=ro)

<sup>9</sup> Decree 42 of 13 October 2022 of the Committee for Exceptional Situations [https://gov.md/sites/default/files/document/attachments/dispozitia\\_cse\\_rm\\_nr.42\\_din\\_13.10.2022.pdf](https://gov.md/sites/default/files/document/attachments/dispozitia_cse_rm_nr.42_din_13.10.2022.pdf)

<sup>10</sup> Declaration on the suspension of the broadcasting right of six TV stations <https://crjm.org/declaratie-privind-suspendarea-dreptului-de-emisie-a-sase-posturi-de-televiziune/>

<sup>11</sup> LRCM's Newsletter 52 (December 2022) <https://crjm.org/buletinul-informativ-nr-52-decembrie-2022/>

<sup>12</sup> Minutes 19 of the Government Meeting of 4 May 2022 [https://gov.md/sites/default/files/document/attachments/extras\\_19\\_2.pdf](https://gov.md/sites/default/files/document/attachments/extras_19_2.pdf)

information as well as the transparency of the work of public institutions. The proposals concerned the mandatory signing of electronic requests, thus putting people who did not have an electronic signature in difficulty, the extension of the time limit for responding to inquiries, and the mandatory completion of a prior challenge procedure. Another amendment concerned the unjustified exclusion of the possibility to forward requests for information to other entities, which would have led to inquirers receiving many refusals from public institutions. Even though the draft law did not pass in Parliament, this initiative was extremely dangerous and could have had a negative impact especially on journalists, whose job is heavily dependent on the timeliness of access to public information. Eventually, the Ministry of Justice developed a new draft law on access to information of public interest, which the Government approved on 12 April 2023.<sup>13</sup>

In 2022, the previous years' harmful practices<sup>14</sup> of suing journalists on contravention charges just for doing their job of informing citizenry on issues of public interest continued. Legal provisions concerning libel were used as a weapon against inconvenient journalists. These practices can deter media outlets from expressing criticism, discourage journalists from contributing to public debate on issues of public interest, and are contrary to the Law on Freedom of Expression, under which journalists enjoy a series of guarantees. Several media outlets issued a statement expressing their concern and condemning these illegal practices, which have been perpetuating for some time now without proper action being taken.

Starting from 18 September 2022, the "Șor" Party held protests in Chisinau, setting up tents in front of the Parliament House. The participants, who demanded the resignation of the president and the current government, were brought in an organized manner from across the country.<sup>15</sup> Because journalists were reporting on protesters being paid to participate, they were attacked and threatened with death during the protests. Thus, on 25 October 2022, media NGOs made a public call<sup>16</sup> condemning the illegal behavior of the protesters.

This document also analyzes the situation of CSOs in the Transnistrian Region. In 2022, the abusive amendments from previous years that prohibited regional nonprofits that receive funds from abroad to carry out some "political" activities,<sup>17</sup> including those related to the promotion and protection of human rights, culminated in the adoption of the "Guretski Law." On 15 February 2022, Anatoli Guretski, the so-called "prosecutor general" of Tiraspol, introduced a "draft law" that provided for the criminal sanctioning of persons who notify foreign law enforcement authorities (including the constitutional ones of the Republic of Moldova) or file complaints against actions committed by representatives of the de facto structures and administration.<sup>18</sup> Despite public appeals and the reaction of the constitutional authorities, the

<sup>13</sup>Minutes 13 of the Government Meeting of 12 April 2023 <https://gov.md/ro/content/sedinta-guvernului-din-12-aprilie-2023-ora-1000>.

<sup>14</sup>Media NGOs Condemn the Abuses of Ceadir-Lunga Police Inspectorate that Served the Journalist Natalia Cebotari a Contravention Notice, 18 May 2020 <http://old.media-azi.md/ro/stiri/ong-urile-de-media-condamna%C4%83-abuzurile-comise-de-inspectoratul-de-poli%C8%99Bie-cead%C3%A9r-lunga-prin>.

<sup>15</sup>LRCM's Newsletter 50 (October 2022): <https://crjm.org/buletin-informativ-nr-50-octombrie-2022/>.

<sup>16</sup><https://tv8.md/2022/25/10/ong-urile-de-media-condamna-actiunile-ilegale-ale-protestatarilor-asupra-jurnalistilor-sfideaza-norme-le-de-drept/213665>.

<sup>17</sup>Radiography of Attacks against Non-governmental Organizations of the Republic of Moldova, 1 January – 31 December 2019, available at <https://crjm.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/04/2020-05-13-Timeline-attacks-CSOs-RO.pdf>

<sup>18</sup>Public call from Promo-LEX Association to the government of the Republic of Moldova and partner institutions regarding the adoption of the "Guretski Act" <https://promolex.md/22113-administratia-de-la-tiraspol-a-decis-sanctionarea-penala-a-persoanelor-care-vor-depu-ne-plangeri-cu-privire-la-violarea-drepturilor-omului-adresate-structurilor-straine/?lang=ro>.



administration of the region introduced these proposals into the so-called Criminal Code, and they became effective on 25 June 2022.

In 2022, the “active” media portals – those that published or took over from other portals with questionable reputation – included [www.telegraph.md](http://www.telegraph.md), [www.moldova24.info](http://www.moldova24.info), [www.a-tv.md](http://www.a-tv.md), <https://www.publika.md/>, <https://actualitati.md/>, [paranteze.md](http://paranteze.md), [noi.md](http://noi.md), [basarabialiterara.com.md](http://basarabialiterara.com.md), [orheity.md](http://orheity.md), [sinteza.org](http://sinteza.org), [sputniknews.com](http://sputniknews.com), [realitatea.md](http://realitatea.md), and Telegram channel [t.me/lustratiapreseiMD](https://t.me/lustratiapreseiMD). Among the blogs that published tendentious and derogatory information about CSOs or their representatives were the blogs of Bogdan Țîrdea, member of Parliament, member of the Bloc of Communists and Socialists of Moldova (BCS) and the blog of Eugen Luchianiuc.

***The list of the signatories is presented at the end of the document.***

**7 JANUARY 2022****Attacks by Anatolii Kobolskiy, employee of the Comrat City Hall, directed against development partners**

**On 7 January 2022, Anatolii Kobolskiy, newly employed road improvement specialist of the Comrat City Hall, [wrote on Facebook](#)** that the funds totaling EUR 60,000 the SFM allocated to Gagauzia to fight domestic violence are intended “to destroy the institution of the family.” This statement was made when the Comrat City Hall was the beneficiary of several development projects financed by the SFM, Keystone, Institutum Virtutes Civilis, USAID, the European Union, etc.

In addition, during 2022, Kobolskiy [spread](#) lots of falsehoods about the war in Ukraine and the existence of some [anti-Russian projects](#) financed by various development partners in the Russian Federation.

**JANUARY – NOVEMBER 2022****Attacks on investigative journalists (Journalistic Investigations Centre, RISE Moldova, CU SENS)**

 [Journalistic Investigations Center \(CIJ\)](#)

**13 January 2022 – Lawyer Igor Hlopețchi [posted](#) a photograph of CIJ CEO Cornelia Cozonac to Facebook** and next to it the image of a pig with the comment “Look what a mountain of bacon.” Ms. Cozonac also said that Igor Hlopețchi published derogatory information that did not correspond to reality, messages inciting hatred, and insults about her. The harassment of the CEO of CIJ started after the publication [of an article](#) about Colonel Hlopețchi, the father of Igor Hlopețchi.

**3 May 2022 – The Buiucani Police Inspectorate from Chisinau** informed CIJ and journalist Julieta Savițchi that they were [investigated on criminal charges](#) of violating the right to privacy of correspondence, based on the complaint filed by Vlad Filat’s lawyer Cristina Doagă.

Julieta Savițchi, a CIJ journalist, is the author of the journalistic investigation [VLAD FILAT: How He Avoided the Confiscation of Wealth](#), published on 18 February 2022, at Anticorupție.md. The investigation shows that, although the sentence of conviction of the ex-prime minister ordered the confiscation of his assets, including the buildings that had been seized, he managed to keep most of his assets.

**22 June 2022 – CIJ CEO Cornelia Cozonac** wrote a [Facebook post](#) describing the attacks investigative journalists are subjected to: “This happens when media investigations touch interests, uncover schemes, spoil plans, etc... I do not even mention social networks. All the relatives and friends of the individuals exposed by our journalistic investigations jump at us with assaults, and report our posts, and Facebook supports them and blocks us...”

**17 August 2022 – in one of its [posts](#), Telegram channel *Lustrăția presei*** described Cornelia Cozonac as a “fake journalist”, mocking her for being an “anti-corruption fighter”. The post criticized the worth of the house she lives in, as well as her other assets, suggesting that they were sponsored by corrupt political figures.

 [CU SENS media portal](#)

**13 July 2022 – At a press conference, Minister of Health Ala Nemerenco [belittled](#)** journalist Felicia Crețu from CU SENS media project. Bothered by her question why the authorities restricted journalists' access to the hospital in Vorniceni, the minister suggested that the journalist worked for a “useless” publication.

The journalists from CU SENS qualified the minister's behavior as abusive and obstructing their access to information and sued the public institution. Currently, the case [is pending before](#) the court.

**8 September 2022 – Fugitive MP and leader of the Șor Party Ilan Șor** posted a [video](#) to Facebook in response to the [investigation](#) published by CU SENS about his location, which was unknown at the time. In this post, Ilan Șor wrote that journalists from CU SENS “knocked on his door,” thus confirming that he was in his country of birth, Israel. He also wrote that the work of CU SENS was rather “fără sens” (meaningless), accusing them of receiving foreign funding under the false pretext of protecting democracy, whereas the real interest was the fight against the opposition. The MP also accused the media portal of producing a sponsored video about his whereabouts and wrote that “they had better keep stealing and pocketing the Western money.”

 [RISE Moldova](#)

**18 October 2022 – Mayor of Hîncești Municipality Alexandru Botnari** held a [press conference](#) in the context of searches conducted at the Hîncești City Hall on 12 October 2022 and lashed out at investigative journalists from RISE Moldova, saying that the facts documented by the journalists were “aberrations, stupidities (...) invented by RISE themselves.” According to the authorities, the searches were conducted as part of a case of fraudulent allocation of several land plots. Earlier, the community of investigative journalists RISE Moldova published an [investigation](#) that revealed that a company with ties to Russian military corporations was intended to make investments in Hîncești. Moreover, the searches at the Hîncești City Hall took place after RISE Moldova published two materials about the questionable distribution of the city hall's land plots through [intermediaries](#) to [chiefs of public institutions](#).

**1 November 2022 – The Șor Party published a [press release](#)**, in which it berated RISE Moldova for their [journalistic investigation](#) about “Șor’s rallies” in the center of Chișinău, which mentioned that this activity was managed by a group of FSB officers led by General Dmitrii Miliutin. In this press release, the Șor Party called the article published by RISE Moldova “*manipulative*”, based on anonymous, unreliable sources, and noted that it was “*a political order cleverly coordinated with the overseas masters of the current government to justify abuses against the opposition*”. RISE Moldova also came under attack for allegedly being “*in the service of the usurping government of PAS*” and promoting “*embarrassing conspiracy theories that disqualify investigative journalism.*”

## FEBRUARY – NOVEMBER 2022

### Attacks on former civil society representatives because of their promotion to public offices

 [Attacks on IPRE because of the appointment of Iulian Rusu to the NAC](#)

**3 February 2022 – Luchianiuc.com blog** published an [article](#) about the appointment of Iulian Rusu to the management of the National Anticorruption Center (NAC) on 2 February 2022. The article contained the following statements: “*Iulian Rusu is an NGO-ist with extensive consulting experience and used to traveling in various missions. [...] The man is part of IPRE, a worthless NGO that launders millions of European Rubles. Why worthless? Because they sign all the crap other people sign without thinking or blinking.*”


**8 February 2022 – Noi.md published an [article](#)** titled *The New Director of the NAC: ‘Reformer or Liquidator’?* that contained a paragraph titled *From an NGO into the Director’s Chair at the NAC*, which hinted that Mr. Rusu had no experience in public management positions and his experience in the community sector was not sufficient to ensure the management of a public agency.

**21 November 2022 – Luchianiuc.com blog** published an [article](#) that mentioned that the director of the NAC Iulian Rusu had requested state protection, for which the State Protection and Guard Service seconded two officers, thus leading to additional costs in the budget. The article mentioned that Iulian Rusu was one of those who capitalized on projects at IPRE. The author also wrote: “*IPRE is an NGO created to attract European funds for young people from the European People’s Party of the Republic of Moldova formed around the figure of Iurie Leancă. When the party lost popularity, IPRE was quickly taken over by a few upstarts and started supporting PAS.*”


 [Attack on the SFM because of the appointment of Andrei Cebotari member of the Superior Council of Prosecutors \(SCP\) to represent the community sector](#)

**3 February 2022 – News portal actualitati.md [published](#)** a public comment of MP from BCS parliamentary group Bogdan Țîrdea, who said that Cebotari was “*the representative of the Soros network and the Moldovan NGO-ism.*” It also hinted that Andrei Cebotari was the subordinate of the former MP Dumitru Alaiba and, therefore, had a conflict of interests.

Andrei Cebotari reacted and said that MP Dumitru Alaiba did not sit in the Competition Commission and, therefore, could not influence the outcome of the competition. In addition, he announced that the legal consultancy contract would be terminated shortly because it was incompatible with the position of member of the SCP.

 [Attack on Ion Guzun, a former employee at the LRCM, because of the positions he holds](#)

**16 August 2022 – In one of its [posts](#), Telegram channel **Lustrația presei** attacked chairperson of the Committee for Pardoning Convicts to the president of the Republic of Moldova and director of the Secretariat of the Independent Anticorruption Consultative Committee Ion Guzun, a former employee at the LRCM, along with civil society in general. The author accused Ion Guzun of being the vice-president of the Board of the Public Association Amnesty International Moldova and an “ex-NGO-ist with a passion for silver.” He also stressed that “all NGO-ists invent new ways to make money by abusing their positions.”**

 [Attack on the ISS director Alexandru Musteață, a former employee at the SFM, because of the promotion of some amendments to the security package by the SFM](#)

**27 August 2022 – Lawyer and PDCM representative Iurie Mărgineanu** wrote a [Facebook post](#), where he attacked director of the Information and Security Service (ISS) Alexandru Musteață, a former employee at the SFM, because of the promotion of some amendments to the security package. The lawyer called him an “NGO-ist who does not know the field” and mentioned that there was no way for people working in civil society to be specialists in national and regional security. He also wrote that almost 50 NGOs supported the government and “at this moment our country is led by people who grew up in NGOs without having worked at state institutions a single day. So, they have no idea how to work in the interests of people and society.” Additionally, he wrote that, considering that those NGOs received funding from foreign governments, it was absolutely clear that they would defend the interests of those governments.

 [Attack on Minister of Home Affairs and former director of the La Strada International Center Ana Revenco](#)

**9 November 2022 – Anonymous website [Moldova-Leaks](#) was launched.** The description of the site read that this was “the largest leak of private correspondence.” For three weeks, the site [published](#) information from the private correspondence attributed to former and current state dignitaries. After 25 November 2022, the site stopped being updated and eventually stopped working. Investigative bodies are investigating this case.

**18 November 2022 – Moldova-Leaks.com published alleged private Telegram chats** (442 chats) of Minister of Home Affairs Ana Revenco. The correspondence leak was accompanied by the following text: “They turned the Republic of Moldova

*into an NGO. And the most important security agency in the country, the MHA, is in charge of a puppet who, all her life, "consumed" grants, drafted useless reports, and traveled in business trips for shopping. Amid a deep economic and social crisis, when the crime rate increases, an incompetent puppet put by Maia Sandu, Ana Revenco, is responsible for our safety."*

## FEBRUARY – JUNE 2022

### Attacks on Pilgrim-Demo Association and journalists from Nokta in Gagauzia

**10 February 2022 – Vladimir Solovyov, a Russian pro-Putin journalist and TV host, [wrote](#)** a post on Telegram with the title "A team copying the activities of Navalnyi's structures operates in Moldova with Western money." Solovyov wrote that Nokta website (a project of Pilgrim-Demo Association) had implemented the Vote Smart project from 2018 through 2019, which was supported financially by the Swiss Ministry of Foreign Affairs through the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation, and that this project was similar to the one implemented by Navalnyi and his associates in 2018.

**5 July 2022 – Nokta journalist Slava Radulov [became the target of insults](#)** from member of the PAG Anatolie Kara, being made, by physical force, to leave the public meeting of the authority. The member of the PAG had been previously suspected of "subversive and unconstitutional activity on the territory of the autonomy" and had to hide for several years from the Moldovan justice in the Russian Federation. The incident was observed by police officer Serghei Dergach (in civilian clothes), who stood near the place of the incident, but refused to present his warrant card and did not react to the use of force against the journalist.

**15 July 2022 – Several media NGOs** signed a [statement](#), by which they expressed their concern about the actions of members and employees of the PAG that undermined the freedom of expression of the press and requested immediate intervention by law enforcement authorities.

**14 August 2022 – After the rally organized in Vulcănești by representatives of the Socialist Party against the increase of prices, the adult children of former member of the PAG Dmitrii Topal [threatened and physically assaulted](#)** Zahar Pavlioglo, cameraman from Nokta, because he was filming a conflict between protesters. One of them threatened that he would "find" and "shave" him, the other pulled his hair (the camera operator has long hair), and local activist Leonid Dobrov reproached him, saying "Put [the camera] away! Don't follow us!"

**On the same day, chairperson of the Bloc of Communists and Socialists in the PAG Ivan Dimitrohlo [commented](#)** that Nokta staff were abused because of the way they reported the news and that they should change their "model of behavior."



**15 August 2022 – Spokesperson of the EU Delegation in Moldova Luciano Scambiato Licciardi** [condemned](#) the harassment of the press and called for an investigation into the incident. The police stated that the incident [was registered](#) at the Vulcănești Police Inspectorate and that an investigation would be carried out.

**7 – 9 FEBRUARY 2022**

**Attacks on environmental activists  
by MP for PAS Alexandru Trubca**

**7 February 2022 – At a meeting of the Parliamentary committee for the environment and regional development on the topic of tire in-cineration, MP for PAS Alexandru Trubca** had a [reprehensible reaction](#) to Ombudsperson for Children's Rights Maia Bănărescu and environmental activists Alecu Reniță and Lilia Curchi. The PAS MP accused Ma-ia Bănărescu of having hidden interests and attacked environmental journalist Lilia Curchi and Chairperson of the National Council of Environmental Organizations Alecu Reniță, declaring that their opinions on the discussed topic are irrelevant because they were mere journalists rather than environmental experts. Moreover, the deputy threatened Mr. Reniță in relation to the funding of the association: *"I promise you that I will raise the question about the funding of your association from public money. Because I know at least... some cases that are dubious."*

**8 February 2022 – 24 nonprofits** signed a [joint statement](#) requesting that the leadership of Parliament and the leadership of PAS parliamentary group take note of the MP's inappropriate behavior and that the MP publicly apologize to the persons concerned. The signatories consider that the gross attitude of MP Trubca was a reaction to critical articles in the press about some decisions taken by those who are responsible for environmental activities and laws.

**9 February 2022 – Alexandru Trubca** [publicly apologized](#), stating that his less diplomatic expression led to a misunderstanding of his words.

**25 MARCH 2022**

**The application of physical and verbal violence by Mayor of Basarabasca Valentin Cimpoieș in the case of a civic activist**

**25 March 2022 – Mayor of Basarabasca Valentin Cimpoieș threatened, insulted, and physically assaulted** chairperson of the youth organization Feedback Dumitru Cimpoieș when the latter tried to register a request for supporting a socially vulnerable elderly person. The mayor forbade the secretary to register the request, then gave the civic activist a shove, punched him in the belly, and tried to take his phone, noticing that he was recording this whole scene. On the same day, Dumitru Cimpoieș uploaded the [recorded audio file](#) to [Facebook](#). The post was shared by many users.

Both the mayor and the activist filed complaints with the police. The Police Inspectorate explained to Dumitru that the city hall was not a public space and that he had no right to make recordings. The local police have the reputation of being ineffective and unfair, considering that the mayor has quite a lot of influence in the city. Currently, the criminal cases are under investigation.

Young activists from the organization are not involved in decision-making, and they are often denied access to information. Since the city of Basarabeasca is not big, the members of the organization continue to get involved in social and voluntary activities, dedicating their time to local problems and finding solutions to them.

**30 MARCH 2022**

**Negative reaction from SCM member Anatolie Galben to the delegation of judges to trainings organized by CSOs**

**30 March 2022** – During [an extraordinary meeting](#) of the Superior Council of the Magistracy (SCM), CSM member Anatolie Galben [spoke out](#) and voted against delegating judges to training events organized by CSOs. Mr. Galben said that it was educational institutions and the National Institute of Justice, rather than public associations, that should deal with legal training and the topic of law. Public associations are already “conducting with the activity of the world, holding round tables, training,” and “preparing” new specialists.

**6 APRIL 2022**

**Series of attacks on IPRE because of the organization of public discussions with the participation of the ISS management**

**6 April 2022** – Online portals [telegraph.md](#) and [actualitati.md](#) published two similar articles with the following tendentious titles: *The ISS Holds Discussions with Pretended Civil Society. Unannounced Event, and the List Was Prepared by IPRE and The ISS Has Secret Meetings with Journalists and Members of Organizations Close to PAS*. Both articles stated that IPRE and the Friedrich Ebert Foundation Moldova were affiliated with PAS and the president of the country Maia Sandu. Likewise, the authors hinted that the meeting was organized in secret, without inviting media outlets. The article used derogatory and biased wording, such as “pretended opinion leaders, journalists, and self-styled security experts.”

The articles appeared shortly after IPRE [announced](#) on the same day on Facebook that, on 5 April 2022, they and the Friedrich Ebert Foundation Moldova hosted an informal meeting with Alexandru Esaulenco, then director of the ISS. The discussion participants talked about national security risks and threats in the regional context. The event was attended by representatives of civil society, research centers, and media outlets.

**4 MAY 2022**

**Legislative initiatives that limit the right of access to information of public interest**

**4 May 2022** – The government approved [a draft bill](#) developed by the Ministry of Justice, which proposed to bring several laws in line with the new provisions of the Administrative Code. These included the Act on Access to Information. The new provisions mostly referred to the following aspects:



**Mandatory signing of electronic requests.** People who did not have an electronic signature would not be able to send requests for information by email. This change would make the process of accessing public information more complex and financially more costly.

**Extension of the time limit for responding to inquiries.** According to [the current Law on Access to Information](#), requested information must be communicated to the inquirer as soon as it becomes available or at the latest within 15 business days of the inquiry being registered, with the possibility to extend this term by five days. The amendments voted by the government, however, provided for the exclusion of the phrase “as soon as they become available” and the establishment of the 15-day term as a rule. Moreover, the new provisions increased the time limit for the examination of inquiries from five to 30 days. This amendment proposal clearly favored public authorities and would have had a negative impact especially on journalists, whose job is heavily dependent on the timeliness of access to public information.

**Exclusion of the possibility for citizens to take the case directly to court when their right to information is violated.** Citizens would have to go through a mandatory preliminary procedure required by the Administrative Code before resorting to courts of law.

**Unjustified exclusion of the possibility to forward requests for information,** which would result in a great deal of refusals from public institutions to inquirers if the requested information was held by another institution, instead of having their inquiry automatically forwarded to the competent institution.

Although the amendments voted by the government had no effect in practice, because they did not pass in Parliament, this initiative was still extremely dangerous, clearly going against the European standards and commitments of the Republic of Moldova (Tromsø Convention) and its democracy goals.

The Ministry of Justice developed a new draft bill on access to information of public interest, which the government [approved](#) on 12 April 2023. The problematic aspects of this draft bill will be discussed in the radiography of attacks for 2023.

**26 MAY 2022****The ombudsperson expressed concern about the attitude shown by the law enforcement toward journalists**

**26 May 2022 – The Office of the Ombudsperson published** a [press-release](#) on its website, in which Ombudsperson Ceslav Panico expressed his concern about the restriction of journalists' access to the courthouse where judges examined the case of ex-president Igor Dodon. The incident was covered by web portals [antico-ruptie.md](#) and [newsmaker.md](#). The ombudsperson noted that public videos appeared to show court employees and representatives of the General Inspectorate of Carabeni of the MHA obstruct the access of some journalists to the courthouse, thus preventing them from doing their job. He urged the responsible authorities to be fair and respectful toward the press that is doing their job so as not to admit the violation of the right to information of the public.

**27 MAY 2022****Denigration campaign against the LRCM because of the justice reform and the work of the Pre-vetting Committee**

**27 May 2022** – **Luchianiuc.com blog** published an [article](#) that contained several attacks on former and current members of civil society: *“These (members of the Extraordinary Evaluation Committee) are Nadejda Hriptievschi (LRCM expert from the team of the father of the Prosecution Authority Act, Vladislav Gribincea, proposed by PAS), Tatiana Răducanu (chairperson of the LRCM’s administrative board, judge with seven cases lost at the ECtHR, appointed by Maia Sandu member of the Supreme Security Council, proposed by PAS),” “Who the other 21 who filled positions in the ‘Pre-Vetting’ Secretariat were remains a big taboo, too, but most likely they also come from the LRCM team – that is, the cronies!!!”*

**28 September 2022** – In the show [Puterea a Patra](#) on N4 TV channel, lawyer **Cristina Ciubotaru**, former vice-director of the NAC, made a series of attacks on CSOs involved in the justice reform (hinting at the LRCM). The lawyer said: *“In the past, all justice reforms were done essentially by the same NGOs that promoted reforms, evaluated them, and then found that they were not implemented well.”* She also said that the biggest disappointment for these organizations would be to find that a reform had achieved its expected effect, which would be what they wanted least. Governments change in the country, but justice reformers do not change. All governments collaborated with the same *“justice reform writing centers.”*

**JUNE – NOVEMBER 2022****Denigrating campaign against the LGBT+ community, GENDERDOC-M, and journalists who promote democratic values**

**31 May 2022** – **Chief Mayor Ion Ceban** [said](#) at a weekly meeting of the City Hall departments that he would not sign the notification requesting the LGBT+ parade and would not allow the holding of this event. On his Facebook page, he wrote the following: *“On my way home! Tomorrow, we celebrate Children’s Day. The City Hall will not accept the gay march planned by the contingent. Do whatever you want at home, not in public.”*

**2 June 2022** – **The Metropolitanate of Moldova** [asked](#) the local government to cancel the **Moldova Pride festival** because *“the parade abusively and publicly defies the values of the majority of our society,”* which *“supports family values.”* The Metropolitanate also cited that the event was a public insult to religious cults and society and that these demonstrations always cause *“dangers, violence, and altercations from both sides.”*

**5 June 2022** – In a [report](#) produced by TV8, asked the question **“LGBT march – are you in favor or against it?”** MP for the Communist Party Vladimir Voronin said: *“It is contrary to physiological and biological laws, contrary to our faith, contrary to morality. It destroys morality. One can’t imagine a man doing this with a man, a woman with a woman. It’s outrageous.”* Socialist MPs Vlad Bătrîncea and Bogdan Țîrdea had similar opinions.

**16 June 2022 – MPs for PCRM and the Șor Party held a [flashmob in front of the Parliament House](#) in protest against the Pride March.** The protesters hung banners on the Parliament House, which stated: *"No homosexual dictatorships," "Moldova against the Pride festival," "No discrimination against traditional values," "Moldova is not Sodom."*

**19 June 2022 – Moldovan LGBT community held 21<sup>st</sup> edition of [Moldova Pride festival](#),** organized by [GENDERDOC-M](#). The organization of the event was accompanied by sustained attacks on this community by the authorities and representatives of the [Moldovan Orthodox Church](#).

**10 October 2022 – As a [political demonstration](#) against PAS, Ion Ceban** blocked the main road Ștefan cel Mare și Sfânt in front of the city hall and indirectly attacked the LGBT community. The mayor accused the community of blocking Bucharest Street during Moldova Pride parade without an authorization from the City Hall. Ion Ceban also accused the government of deliberately cheating and ensuring protection, which cost MDL 4 million, for the participants in the parade.

**9 August 2022 – In a [public speech](#), Ilan Șor** lashed out at the members of the current Legislature, making direct reference to the LGBT community. He said: *"Today in our country, it is fashionable to be gay or lesbian. It's a shame!"* He also mentioned that such homophobic messages are often used in the speeches of politicians from the Republic of Moldova for political and electoral purposes.

**17 October 2022 – Socialist MP Bogdan Țirdea [wrote on Facebook](#)** that Dorin Galben's [interview](#) with a representative of the LGBT community disgusted him and stressed that this was the effect of the Republic of Moldova ratifying the [Istanbul Convention](#).

On the same day, Dorin Galben came under attack from **Telegram channel Lustrăția presei**. In [a post](#), the channel described the journalist as *"the trash bin of morality of the Moldovan journalism,"* who *"turned journalism into a brothel, inviting all the degenerates for interview, just for the sake of ratings."* This post was about Dorin Galben's guests and topics discussed on his shows.

**25 October 2022 – GENDERDOC-M Information Center started a campaign called [LGBT Children in Your School](#)** to combat stereotypes about the LGBT+ community and bullying in schools. This initiative soon caused negative reactions from the opposition and some public figures. In a [press release](#) on 8 November 2022, the Socialist Party of the Republic of Moldova (PSRM) condemned this campaign. PSRM qualified it as *"propaganda"* and *"LGBT promotion campaign,"* which is *"a direct attack on the institution of family,"* society's values, and ethical norms. PSRM representatives criticized the authorities for promoting and supporting the LGBT+ community, mentioning pride parades and *"the adoption of the Istanbul Convention in a version that is unacceptable for Moldovan society."*

**8 November 2022 – Ex-president of the Republic of Moldova Igor Dodon** commented this initiative on Facebook, declaring that he was against *“the propaganda of homosexuality and immorality in schools, pushed persistently by the current anti-national and anti-Christian government.”*

**On the same day, in a [Facebook post](#), former prime minister and current leader of PDCM Ion Chicu** criticized this campaign, [stating](#) that *“tolerance and non-discrimination have nothing to do with the premeditated and aggressive promotion of certain things that are utterly unnatural for most people of this country in schools.”*

**9 November 2022 – The General Directorate for Education in Gagauzia** officially [declared](#) that the LGBT Children in Your School campaign was inadmissible and noted that it would not allow it in the educational institutions subordinate to the directorate or working on the territory of the autonomy. Officials noted that traditional family values and the spiritual and moral education of the younger generation had always been at the center of Moldovan and Gagauz society.

**On the same day, former justice minister and current member of PDCM Fadei Nagacevschi** also went to Facebook, [writing the following](#): *“Gagauzia has expressed its official position against the campaign LGBT Children in Your School”* and asked the government and other authorities to do the same or else they would be perceived as *“cowards.”*

**10 November 2022 – Socialist MP Adrian Albu** [requested](#) a hearing of the Minister of Education and Research (MER) Anatolie Topală in relation to the information about the start of this campaign by GENDERDOC-M Information Center, stressing once again that PSRM was categorically against this initiative. MER representatives [stated](#) that the campaign had not been initiated, consulted, or coordinated with the ministry.

Other similar attacks are described in [Raportul privind situația drepturilor persoanelor LGBT+ în Republica Moldova anul 2022](#) (Report on the rights of LGBT+ people in the Republic of Moldova in 2022).

## JULY – AUGUST 2022

### The use of the provisions concerning defamation from the Contravention Code to intimidate journalists

**26 July 2022 – Based on a complaint filed by MHA employee Vitalie Grabovschi**, the Chișinău Court [issued a judgment](#), sanctioning the administrator of Jurnal TV Val Butnaru for defamation with a fine and barring him from holding executive positions in any media outlet for six months.

On the same day, just a few hours later, based on the complaint of officer Ion Țărnă and former police officer Alexei Vizdan, the Buiucani Police Inspectorate produced another contraventional protocol concerning defamation by the journalist. The police officer who prepared the act of finding requested that the court bar Val Butnaru from performing his work for one year for allowing the dissemination of *“false and defamatory information.”* Vitalie Grabovschi, Ion Țărnă, and Alexei Vizdan

had appeared in the journalistic materials broadcast by Jurnal TV. Previously, the editorial office of the media outlet had reported that Ion Țărnă and Alexei Vizdan had entered the office of Jurnal TV by force and berated its journalists.

**8 August 2022 – Several media nonprofits issued a [statement](#)**, condemning the practice of using the defamation provisions of the Contravention Code as a means of intimidating the press. Another similar statement was issued in [2020](#).

**15 August 2022 – The Journalistic Investigations Center sent [an information letter](#)** to the Parliamentary committee for culture, education, research, youth, sport, and mass media, explaining the need to change the national legal framework to stop practices that undermine the freedom of the press. The journalists referred to the practice of using the provisions of Article 70 (defamation) of the Contravention Code as a means of intimidating journalists, which was reported by media NGOs at least three times in the past two years.

## AUGUST – DECEMBER 2022

### Attacks by Socialist MP Bogdan Țirdea on CSOs that promote democratic values

**30 August 2022 – In a [Facebook post](#), Bogdan Țirdea criticized** the speech of journalist Dorin Galben on the occasion of Independence Day, in which he urged citizens not to be influenced by Russian propaganda and “*not to promote the interests of a tyrant and dictator at our home.*” The Socialist MP called Dorin Galben a “*Sorosist and courtier journalist,*” mocking the journalist’s message to create a society in the Republic of Moldova as democratic and prosperous as in the West.

**2 November 2022 – At a [media forum of the CIS states](#), MP Bogdan Țirdea** had a speech, which he posted on TikTok on November 4 with the title [Как Западные фонды и колониальные СМИ в СНГ борются с нашей верой, культурой и независимостью?](#) (How Western Funds and Colonial Media Outlets in the CIS Fight Our Faith, Culture, and Independence). In this speech, the Socialist noted that NGOs and media outlets had created colonial networks throughout the post-Soviet space, including Moldova, which are led by the European Endowment for Democracy, the US National Endowment for Democracy, and the Soros Fund. The MPs enumerated several Moldovan nonprofits paid by the Soros network, the amounts paid, and the specific tasks they must perform. These organizations included WatchDOG, Promo-LEX, the Independent Press Association, IDIS Viitorul, GENDER-DOC-M, and the Center for Policies and Reforms.

**1 December 2022 – MP Bogdan Țirdea posted a footage from a show on [Radio Sputnik on TikTok](#)**, where he said that Moldova risked becoming a colony because of the 14,000 nonprofits active in Moldova, where at least two of them have an annual budget of between EUR 300,000 and 6 million. He referred to the Center for Health Policies and Studies, whose annual budget ranges between EUR 5 and 6 million, and Expert Group, IDIS Viitorul, Promo-LEX, and the LRCM, whose annual budgets range between USD 1 million and 2.5 million.

He also said: *“The West wants to create huge networks of nonprofits and media outlets to destroy political opponents, which they did in the case of Dodon, and they can wash the image of any criminal and thief, as was the case with Maia Sandu. She brought the Sorosists and the US Embassy and put a Romanian citizen as chief of the Service for Preventing and Combating Money Laundering and an American citizen as chief of the Anticorruption Prosecution Office, who now have access to state secrets.”* In addition, Țîrdea wrote that both PAS MP Olesea Stamate and ISS director Alexandru Musteață were program directors at the SFM.

**15 AND 16 SEPTEMBER 2022**

**Attacks on the LRCM because of the organization of the Justice Reform and Anticorruption Forum**

**15 and 16 September 2022 – The LRCM, in partnership with the Ministry of Justice (MJ),** held the fourth edition of the [Justice Reform and Anticorruption Forum](#) (JRA Forum). Former justice minister Fadei Nagacevschi [berated](#) this event in a Facebook post, writing: *“On today’s justice reform and justice forum, Mr. Litvinenco next to Iulian Groza (an NGO-ist) and a state secretary from foreign affairs at an international forum. Ms. President next to the ambassadors of the US and the EU and Vlad Gribincea (NGO-ist). Congratulations to Vlad Gribincea and Iulian Groza – one eternal reformer and the other the mediator of the clans. You put the “minister” under the chair. You made him really touch bottom. :)”* Currently this post is no longer available on Facebook.

**15 September 2022 – The online portal of newspaper Basarabia Literară published [an article](#)** that alleged that Vladislav Gribincea, then CEO of the LRCM, benefited from large grants for the reform of justice from international donors, but the implementation of all reforms was deliberately bad to allow them to receive additional grants at a later time. Vladislav Gribincea was also called the promoter of the reform to reduce the number of courts, which helped the takeover of the system by the Plahotniuc regime, and the author of the Prosecution Authority Act, which later led to multiple problems.

The media outlet also hinted that Gribincea's activity at the public association was incompatible with his lawyer status and alleged that he had political affiliation with PAS because of his close relationship with then justice minister Sergiu Litvinenco.



**27 SEPTEMBER 2022****Attack on journalist Alex Cozer and Jurnal TV because of a public statement**

**23 September 2022 – Jurnal TV broadcast the [show](#) *Post Scriptum cu Alex Cozer* titled Revelations of Filat's Lawyer. During the show, host Alex Cozer said: “[...] in a country where at least half of lawyers are nothing but fraudsters, negotiators between judges, prosecutors, and clients, handbag carriers, and money launderers [...]”**

**26 September – Chair of the Moldovan Bar Union (UAM) Dorin Popescu [wrote](#) on Facebook and on the website of UAM, criticizing the wording used by journalist Alex Cozer to describe lawyers’ work in the country and demanded the publication of necessary corrections and proper apologies to the lawyers community.**

**27 September 2022 – Telegram channel *Lustrația presei* wrote a [post](#) that referred to the words of journalist Cozer and the comments of Mr. Popescu. In this post, the channel lashed out at journalist Alex Cozer and Jurnal TV with its employees on the whole. Thus, the author used the phrases: “*Philatelist media puppet Alex Cozer*”; “*The so-called toilet paper journalist (Alex Cozer) fed with leftovers from the STOLEN BILLION voiced a serious stupidity about lawyers, [...] in the image and semblance of his spiritual leader Vlad Filat.*” “*One more step and Jurnal TV media brothel with all its specimens like Val Butnaru, Constantin Cheianu, and A(ssho)lex Cozer will lose its license.*”**

**SEPTEMBER – OCTOBER 2022****Series of attacks on the journalists from Ziarul de Gardă, AGORA, and TV8 during the protests organized by the Șor Party**

**30 September 2022 – Ziarul de Gardă (ZdG) produced a [report](#) about protesters from the Șor Party who were paid to participate. The report prompted attacks and death threats against ZdG reporters, posted by an individual on the outlet’s [YouTube page](#): “*Someone will cut off your head, take my word. [...] We’re gonna cut off your head, for real, right from the throat*” or “*Don’t criticize or else someone’s gonna cut your head. I swear.*” or “*Yeaaah, chicks, we’ll take off your head, right from your throat.*” ZdG filed a complaint with the police about this incident, and the police started criminal investigation.**

In addition, after this journalistic investigation, the phone numbers of the ZdG journalists [were exposed](#) online, and the journalists began receiving hateful and defamatory messages from aggressive individuals. The reporters from ZdG filed a complaint to the authorities, which the MHA forwarded to the National Center for the Protection of Personal Data (CNPDCP), invoking the fact that the website exposed the journalists' personal data. Unfortunately, neither CNPDCP nor the police could verify the threats posted online by individuals from abroad.

**18 – 19 September 2022 – AGORA journalist Irina Soltan, who filmed the protest organized by the Șor Party, [became the victim](#) of verbal harassment and unsolicited touches by some demonstrators. Among inappropriate comments addressed to her are: “*You’re so good...*” or “*I’m gonna break your phone!*” or “*How much did they pay you to film?*”**

**25 September 2022 – AGORA journalist Mihail Caragacean also became a [victim](#)** of aggressive behavior from protest participants. One of the protesters tried to throw his mobile phone, with which he was filming. Another protester insulted the journalist. The editorial office of AGORA [condemned](#) this behavior, publicly asking the organizers and authorities to ensure the security of the press in such situations.

**18 September 2022 – TV8 journalist Viorica Tătaru also became a [target](#)** for insults, offensive harassment, and threats from a participant in the protest organized by the Șor Party. After Viorica Tătaru published several [videos](#) filmed at the protests, she received [death threats](#) from a man in a private chat on a social networks. The author, whose profile is identified as [Costea Gorpin](#), wrote that the journalist would be killed for her questions to protesters: *"You're gonna get a bullet in the head from someone with your questions."* There were also posts like the following: *"Don't walk around and film, or else someone's gonna cut off your hands"* or *"Someone's gonna cut off your head."* The TV8 journalist filed a complaint with the police.

Such threats came in daily so that journalists started perceiving them as a norm. In certain tense situations, they had to request the intervention of the police to get protection from violent protesters.

**17 October 2022 – Several CSOs, namely** Amnesty International Moldova, the Center for Policies and Reforms, Promo-LEX Association, and the Human Rights Embassy, issued [a joint statement](#) on the dispersal of the protest of 16 October 2022. The signatories declared that the evacuation of tents from the square in front of the Parliament House and from the walkway in front of the Presidency and the stopping of the protest on 16 October 2022 were incommensurate and abusive, whereas the evacuation of tents from the roadway was justified.

**[22 September](#) and [25 October 2022](#) – Media NGOs condemned the illegal behavior of the demonstrators.** In these statements, the organizations stressed that those actions violated the right to the physical integrity of the individual and the right to personal freedom and security and interfered with the special rights guaranteed to journalists. The organizations requested the law enforcement authorities to sanction the aggressors following legal procedures.

**27 October 2022 – Media nonprofits [condemned once again the practice of intimidating](#)** journalists on the Internet for doing their job of informing the public about the protests organized in the center of the capital city by the Șor Party and requested the law enforcement authorities to apply criminal punishment to the authors of the death threats sent to journalists.



**11 OCTOBER 2022****Attack by Eugen Luchianiuc on the CSOs that organized the visit of the management of the NAC and the AP to Bucharest**

**11 October 2022 – Luchianiuc.com blog published [an article](#)** titled *Do You Think It's OK that the Soros Foundation Pays for the Travel of the Chiefs of the NAC and the AP, Rusu and Dragalin, to Bucharest?* The article appeared on 10 October 2022, after IPRE's Executive Director Iulian Groza wrote on Facebook that Expert Forum from Romania was hosting a discussion of Chief Prosecutor of the Moldovan AP Veronica Dragalin and Chief of the Moldovan NAC Iulian Rusu with investigative journalists and anti-corruption experts from Romania.

The article had several fragments where the author berated civil society members. The author used the following phrase: *"And here I could throw lots of rotten eggs on those from the Institute for European Policies and Reforms, not least because they had signed all kinds of public letters composed by such m\*\*rons (uncensored word) as Macovei (Moldovan journalist), where I was mentioned, too, but... not now."* Thus, the author attacked IPRE and journalist Macovei. The article also stated: *"Now imagine Viorel Chetragu announce that he will travel to Bucharest with the money of Edelweiss Foundation. How Would Gribincea's NGOs react?"*

**22 November 2022 – Luchianiuc updated his blog with** another [article](#), titled *"Projects 'для галочки.' The Case of an IPRE Project (Founded by Iurie Leancă),"* immediately after IPRE released the [Functional Analysis of the Anticorruption Prosecution Office](#) of the Republic of Moldova for the period May – September 2022. The blogger criticized the organization for reorienting itself according to the political situation and because *"they signed (and possibly still sign) all crap invented by big 'Ruble launderers,' such as Petru Macovei. The organization has already been accused in the past that it supports financially the foreign visits of chiefs of public institutions, which were possible not least because the owners of IPRE never criticized the government."* The article also lashed out at ex-CEO of the LRCM Vladislav Gribincea, calling him *"the golden child of justice reforms,"* and ex-director of the Justice and Human Rights Program Victor Munteanu, hinting that he was *"the brother of the interim prosecutor general."*

**OCTOBER –  
DECEMBER 2022****Restriction of the right to freedom of peaceful assembly and the right to freedom of expression by the Committee for Exceptional Situations (CES)**

After the Russian invasion of Ukraine on 24 February 2022, the CES was empowered by Parliament's decision on the declaration of a state of emergency to issue decrees that limit certain fundamental rights, including the right to freedom of peaceful assembly and the right to freedom of expression.

**13 October 2022 – The CES issued [Decree 42](#),** which limited the freedom of peaceful assembly. This decree banned assemblies that blocked traffic during business days and assigned the police an exclusive role in the legal procedures for stopping and dispersing assemblies. Previously, in June 2022, the MHA proposed for consultation a draft bill to amend the Meetings Act. The draft bill prohi-

bited meetings held within less than ten meters of the offices of diplomatic missions and state institutions, introduced an authorization procedure for meetings organized along the frontier, and provided for other measures that were incompatible with international standards concerning freedom of assembly. Following criticism from CSOs, the MHA dropped the draft bill.

**16 December 2022 – The CES issued [Decree 54](#)**, which suspended the broadcasting licenses of six TV stations for the state of emergency “due to lack of correct information in covering national events and the war in Ukraine.” The CES adopted this decision by derogating from Article 84 (10) of the Audiovisual Media Services Code, which stipulates that the broadcasting license may be suspended only after the application of other sanctions and the recurrence of violations, as well as from the provisions of the Civil Procedure Code, according to which licenses may be suspended only by courts of law.

**20 December 2022 – Several CSOs issued a [statement](#)**, demanding that all factual circumstances and concrete arguments underlying the CES' decision to suspend the broadcasting right of the six TV stations be made public.

## OCTOBER – NOVEMBER 2022

### Excessive definition of effective beneficial owner for CSOs

**October 2022 – The Parliamentary committee on security, defense, and public order** (*parliamentary committee*) organized first public consultations on [the draft bill](#) concerning the amendment of the legislation on the prevention and combating of money laundering and terrorism financing, developed by a working group coordinated by the Service for the Prevention and Combating of Money Laundering (SPCML). The proposed amendments also provided for changing the definition of effective beneficial owner for nonprofit organizations. The draft bill was not consulted with CSOs, and the definition of effective beneficial owner was not adapted to their varying nature. The version proposed by the authorities introduced a complicated procedure for registering nonprofits, requiring the presentation of copies of the identity documents of all members of the organization's governing bodies to be registered as effective beneficial owners of the organization. This would further complicate the work of CSOs with bureaucratic burden. Moreover, this might deter members of governing bodies from setting up nonprofits and becoming their members in the future.

Currently, to register a nonprofit, in addition to mandatory documents, the founders must present information about the effective beneficial owner in accordance with the Act on the Prevention and Combating of Money Laundering and Terrorism Financing. Under the current definition, if it is impossible to identify the effective beneficial owner of an organization (as is the case with CSOs), the organization must indicate the administrator, who is usually the CEO.

Aligning the national legal framework governing this field with EU directives is one of the EU recommendations. Changing the definition of effective beneficial ow-

ner was necessary for the identification of CSOs with increased risk of financing terrorism. That said, so far at the national level, no nonprofits were identified to be involved in the financing of terrorism and, according to the [SPCML's assessments](#), the risk of terrorism financing in the Republic of Moldova is very low.

**21 November 2022 – The parliamentary committee organized public hearings**, to which it did not invite civil society representatives. However, representatives of the LRCM managed to participate in the hearings and raised the issue of the definition of effective beneficial owner.

**22 December 2022 – The bill [passed](#) its first reading, and on 30 March 2023, it passed its second reading.** Between the readings, several organizations sent the parliamentary committee [a joint legal opinion](#), proposing a separate definition of effective beneficial owner for CSOs. The authors agreed to insert the definition proposed by the noncommercial sector into the bill.

## 21 OCTOBER 2022

### The sympathizers of the Șor Political Party organized a flashmob, accusing the SFM of interfering in state affairs

**21 October 2022 – Telegraph.md portal** published [an article](#) titled *Citizens Challenged the Capture of Moldova by the Soros Network*. Similar articles appeared on [orheity.md](#), [sinteza.org](#), [realitate.md](#), and [sputniknews.com](#). The article reported on the organization of a flashmob on the topic Meritocracy of Cronies in front of the Prosecutor General's Office. The demonstration was organized by members and sympathizers of the Șor Party. They hanged banners with the image of an octopus with the head of Moldovan President Maia Sandu, and at the end of the tentacles it had the heads of officials allegedly connected to the Soros Foundation. Among other things, the protesters had placards with the following inscriptions: "Maia Soro(S)andu," "PAS turns the country into a chapter of Soros," and "Octopus Soro(S)andu penetrated all state institutions."

The article stated: "Maia Sandu gathers only representatives of the Soros Foundation around her for enrichment. They will squeeze as much money as they can from this place and will leave."

## 4 NOVEMBER 2022

### Protests after the appointment of Ion Munteanu as interim prosecutor general

**4 November 2022 – Several [protests](#)** took place in front of the house of Ion Munteanu, [appointed](#) interim prosecutor general on 12 October 2022. Protesters, wearing face masks and holding placards, [accused](#) Munteanu of being "Maia's new slave" or a "puppet of Sandu-Soros" and claiming that "the prosecutor's office and the police are Satan" and "the prosecutor's office defends the dictatorship." The candidacy of Ion Munteanu was proposed to the chief of state by the Superior Council of Prosecutors after Dumitru Robu completed his mandate on 5 October 2022, having served as interim prosecutor general since 6 October 2021.

**29 NOVEMBER 2022****Attack on TV8 journalist  
Viorica Tătaru**

**On 29 November 2022 – Telegram channel Lustrația presei posted a derogatory collage** showing TV8 journalist Viorica Tătaru. She became known to the public especially after producing a series of reports and articles about the horrors of the Russian war in Ukraine.

The picture showed the journalist and was accompanied by the inscription *“I am a yellow puppet-journalist (allusion to the Action and Solidarity Party). I make fun of the needy.”* Below, the picture had the inscription in Russian – *“Any truth for your money.”*

**4 DECEMBER 2022****Attack on SCOs that offer assistance  
to victims of domestic violence**

**In an interview on Fără protocol show on 4 December 2022**, show guest Angela Stafii, philosopher and couple counselor, had an exchange of views with host Dorin Galben, criticizing SCOs that provided assistance to victims of domestic violence. She said: *“these NGOs with their dry speeches that have nothing to do with emotion. [...] They spend millions to produce some you-are-not-alone posters. [...] NGOs already take care of the way we speak. [...] Why intervene with policies where things are working? They did all kinds of stupid things. [...] What values do they promote?”*

Dorin Galben seemed to share her opinions, saying that these NGOs used *“stereotypic discourse that the victim should seek help, but everyone is afraid of them (the NGOs).”* He also said: *“They think they are promoting values [...] and those who say something that goes against these values (promoted by the NGO) – they attack them, and they are worse than those whom they try to condemn. [...] For years, they continued the same communication strategies with bruises around the eyes.”*

Line nonprofits did not react, although some people from the civil society [commented](#) this interview posted on Facebook, calling them to do so.

**TRANSNISTRIAN REGION****Criminal sanctions for those who file complaints against the actions  
of representatives of the de facto administration of Transnistria**

### **The Transnistrian legal framework that restricts the work of NGOs**

In 2022, the abusive amendments from previous years that prohibited Transnistrian nonprofits that received funds from abroad to carry out some *“political”* activities (more about that in the [radiography of attacks](#) on NGOs for 2019) culminated in the **adoption of the “Guretski Act.”**

15 February 2022 – The so-called “prosecutor general” of Tiraspol Anatoli Guretski [introduced](#) a “draft bill” that provided for the criminal sanctioning of persons who notify foreign law enforcement authorities (including the constitutional ones of the Republic of Moldova) or file complaints against actions committed by representa-

tives of the *de facto* structures and administration. Anatoli Guretski [had been identified as responsible](#) for human rights violations in at least six judgments of the European Court of Human Rights. Despite [public appeals](#) and the [reaction of the constitutional authorities](#), the administration of the region introduced these proposals into the so-called Criminal Code, and they became effective on 25 June 2022.

Under these [legislative provisions](#), anyone who files a complaint to the law enforcement bodies of the Republic of Moldova (the police, the prosecution office) about abuses in the Transnistrian Region (deprivation of freedom, illegal arrest, torture, the seizure of assets, searches, etc.) risks a prison term of up to five years on the left bank of the Nistru. If the constitutional law enforcement authorities start legal action, the person risks a prison term of up to eight years.

The adoption of these “legal” amendments shows the desire of the Tiraspol regime to keep impunity in the region and to tighten total control and the persecution of people who dare to seek the protection and defense of their fundamental rights or to criticize the actions or inactions of the representatives of the *de facto* authorities. These rights were often protected by CSOs or human rights defenders.

**26 September 2022 – The so-called “court of Tiraspol City” [sentenced](#) civic activist Victor Pleșcanov** to three years and two months in prison for “inciting extremism” and insulting “the Ministry of State Security from Tiraspol.” Right from the onset of the Russian invasion of Ukraine on 24 February 2022, he had been criticizing the abuses committed by the Russian army, including the illegality of its deployment in the Transnistrian Region. **On 29 September 2022, Promo-LEX Association [requested](#) that the national authorities** and international organizations take prompt actions for the unconditional release of Victor Pleșcanov and the application of protective measures to his family.

## LISTA ORGANIZAȚIILOR SEMNATARE ALE PREZENTEI RADIOGRAFII:



The **Legal Resources Centre from Moldova (LRCM)** is a think tank with extensive expertise in analyzing the functioning of the justice sector, reforming it, and promoting human rights and reforms that ensure an enabling environment for CSOs. More information is available at <https://crjm.org>.



Institutul de  
Politici Publice

**The Institute for Public Policy (IPP)** is an apolitical nonprofit organization. Its purpose is to contribute to the development of the Republic of Moldova in the spirit of an open, participative, and pluralistic society committed to democratic values. More information is available at [www.ipp.md](http://www.ipp.md).



**IDIS Viitorul** is an independent think tank, established in 1993, which combines social, political, and economic research with strong advocacy components. The organization carries out applied monitoring research in several fields: economy, social policy, EU policies, regional development, as well as security and foreign policy risks. More information is available at <http://viitorul.org/ro>.

**Promo-LEX**

*Promovarea democrației și a drepturilor omului*

**Promo-LEX Association** is an NGO that promotes democracy in the Republic of Moldova, including the Transnistrian Region, by advocating and defending human rights, monitoring democratic processes, and strengthening civil society. More information is available at [www.promolex.md](http://www.promolex.md).



**East Europe Foundation** was registered on 3 November 2009 with the Ministry of Justice of the Republic of Moldova and is the successor of the Eurasia Foundation (EF) in Moldova. The new organization builds on the work of the Eurasia Foundation, which since 1994, has contributed to promoting democracy, human rights, and the market economy and supported the development of civil society, media outlets, and the transparency of public administration in the country. The mission of East Europe Foundation is to empower the citizens of the Republic of Moldova with capabilities and means to ensure sustainable development, through education and technical assistance programs that promote democracy, good governance, and economic prosperity. More information is available at [www.eef.md](http://www.eef.md).



## **GENDERDOC** **M**

**GENDERDOC-M** is the first NGO that defends and promotes LGBT rights in the Republic of Moldova. The mission of the organization is to create a legislative, legal, and social environment for lesbians, gays, bisexuals, and transgenders by developing the LGBT community, informing, promoting their rights, providing services, and expanding organizational capacities. More information is available at [www.gdm.md](http://www.gdm.md).



The **Center for Organizational Consultancy and Training (CICO)** is an NGO that has been operating since 2006 as a resource and a development center for Moldovan CSOs. Over the years, CICO has contributed to increasing the management and leadership skills of CSOs and transforming them into sustainable, high-performing organizations with good governance principles. More information is available at <https://management.md/>.



The **Independent Journalism Center (CJI)** is one of the first media NGOs in the Republic of Moldova. Founded in 1994, the organization has the mission of contributing to the strengthening of a free and viable press by offering assistance to independent media outlets and journalists, training in journalism and public relations, and conducting information, advocacy, research, and media education campaigns. More information is available at [www.cji.md](http://www.cji.md).



**CU SENS** is an independent media outlet from the Republic of Moldova, which investigates cases of corruption, organized crime, and human rights violation. It monitors how public money is spent and how public figures comply with integrity principles. It also monitors the work of state institutions and brings the identified illegalities to the public eye, using the techniques of investigative journalism. More information is available at [www.cusens.md](http://www.cusens.md).



**Media Alternativa Public Association is a nonprofit organization that founded TV8 station.** TV8 has managed to position itself as a credible and objective information source, as confirmed by all independent monitoring reports. The organization offers platform for people who think, care, and act for the future of Moldova. More information is available at <https://tv8.md/despre-noi>.

**centrul de —  
— politici și  
- reforme —**

The **Center for Policies and Reforms** has the mission of promoting access to information and public participation, honest and responsible entrepreneurship, human rights, with an emphasis on freedom of assembly and expression, and accessibility and transparency of the judiciary. The organization works at the legislative level – proposing policies and regulations – builds the capacities of public officials and institutions, and engages citizenry, offering them the democracy tools necessary for involvement in decision-making. More information is available at [www.cpr.md](http://www.cpr.md).

**The document is open for signing.**





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