

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

01 JANUARY 2025 – 28 FEBRUARY 2026





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

01 JANUARY 2025 – 28 FEBRUARY 2026



This publication was produced with the financial support of the Canadian Fund for Local Initiatives (CFLI) within the project “Resilient Civil Society and Critical Thinking for Free and Fair Elections,” implemented by the Legal Resources Centre from Moldova (CRJM). The content presented is the sole responsibility of CRJM and does not necessarily reflect the views of the Government of Canada.

CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION	3
SUMMARY OF KEY FINDINGS IN 2025	5
RADIOGRAPHY OF THE ATTACKS IN 2025	8
CATEGORY 1: Delegitimization of civil society and the media through financial narratives and claims of “foreign influence”	8
CATEGORY 2: Damaging the reputation and undermining the professional credibility of CSOs and HRDs	17
CATEGORY 3: Portraying CSOs, NGOs, and the independent media as extensions of the government or political parties.	19
CATEGORY 4: Direct attacks on independent media in the exercise of their profession	26
CATEGORY 5: Suppression of freedom of expression and activity of HRD in the Transnistrian region..	41
CATEGORY 6: Use of parallel structures and the delegitimation of civil society.	44
CATEGORY 7: Coordinated disinformation campaigns, harassment, and attacks in the online information space.	46
CATEGORY 8: Stigmatisation of HRDs and identity-based attacks	49
LIST OF SIGNATORY ORGANIZATIONS..	51

INTRODUCTION

Radiography of Attacks on Civil Society Organizations (CSOs), Journalists, and Human Rights Defenders (HRDs) in the Republic of Moldova is a joint effort to document incidents and events that undermine and deteriorate their operating environment. This is the ninth edition of the Radiography and it covers the period between 1 January 2025 and 28 February 2026. Similar analyses were presented for the periods of 2016-2017¹, 2018², 2019³, 2020⁴, 2021⁵, 2022⁶, 2023⁷ and 2024⁸.

For the purposes of this document, "attacks" specifically refer to statements and actions by public figures, including dignitaries, politicians, opinion leaders, and digital content creators, aimed at discrediting or undermining the work of CSOs, journalists, and HRDs. These attacks commonly involve portraying them in a negative light through insinuations, labelling, and associations with controversial issues that generate strong societal reactions. Tactics also include intimidation and/or harassment, public defamation, threats, and the initiation of abusive legal proceedings (SLAPPs).

In numerous instances, such attacks take the form of concerted disinformation campaigns, carried out via the media, social networks, and communication applications, including anonymous channels, as well as through public statements or live broadcasts, which are subsequently amplified across other media platforms. There is also evidence of the use of technical means, such as networks of fake accounts or bots, to artificially generate visibility and reinforce certain hostile narratives. Attacks may also be indirect in nature, through the creation or exploitation of

¹ Radiography of Attacks on Non-Governmental Organizations in the Republic of Moldova, September 2016 – December 2017, available at: <https://crjm.org/en/radiography-of-attacks-against-nongovernmental-organizations-from-the-republic-of-moldova-september-2016-december-2017/12897/>.

² Radiography of Attacks on Non-Governmental Organizations in the Republic of Moldova, January – December 2018: <https://crjm.org/en/radiography-of-attacks-against-non-governmental-organizations-from-the-republic-of-moldova-1-january-31-december-2018/12939/>.

³ Radiography of Attacks on Non-Governmental Organizations in the Republic of Moldova, January – December 2019: <https://crjm.org/en/radiography-of-attacks-against-civil-society-organisations-in-2019/20901/>.

⁴ Radiography of Attacks on Civil Society Organizations in the Republic of Moldova, January – December 2020: <https://crjm.org/en/radiography-of-attacks-on-civil-society-organisations-in-the-republic-of-moldova-in-2020/20897/>.

⁵ Radiography of Attacks on Civil Society Organizations in the Republic of Moldova, January – December 2021: <https://crjm.org/en/radiography-of-attacks-on-civil-society-organizations-and-human-rights-defenders-in-the-republic-of-moldova-in-2021/21018/>.

⁶ Radiography of attacks on Civil Society Organizations and Human Rights Defenders in the Republic of Moldova, January – December 2022: <https://crjm.org/en/radiography-of-attacks-on-civil-society-organizations-and-human-rights-defenders-in-the-republic-of-moldova-in-2022/19211/>.

⁷ Radiography of attacks on Civil Society Organizations and Human Rights Defenders in the Republic of Moldova, January – December 2023: <https://crjm.org/en/radiography-of-attacks-on-civil-society-organizations-and-human-rights-defenders-in-the-republic-of-moldova-in-2023/22581/>.

⁸ Radiography of Attacks on Civil Society Organizations and Human Rights Defenders in the Republic of Moldova, January 2024 – 28 February 2025: <https://crjm.org/en/radiography-of-attacks-on-civil-society-organizations-and-human-rights-defenders-in-the-republic-of-moldova-in-2024/26486/>.

entities that present themselves as non-governmental organisations, but, in fact, promote agendas designed to undermine democratic processes. Such practices undermine the credibility of civil society and contribute to the erosion of public trust in democratic values.

Systematic documentation of such phenomena is necessary in the context where CSOs, journalists and HRDs are the target of recurring discrediting campaigns, particularly when they support reform processes, promote European integration or defend human rights, especially those of minority or vulnerable groups, and/or receive funding from external sources to carry out these activities.

The purpose of this document is to highlight the identified false narratives and patterns of attack, as well as to formulate recommendations addressed to public authorities and other relevant stakeholders for ensuring a safe and enabling environment for the functioning of civil society. At the same time, the document provides a framework for coherent and reasoned responses to such attacks, helping to strengthen solidarity and cooperation among the organisations and individuals concerned.

The phenomenon of attacks on civil society is not an isolated problem for the Republic of Moldova but reflects a broader trend in countries with fragile democratic systems. This concern has been recognized by the United Nations (UN) Special Rapporteur on Human Rights Defenders during the official visit to Georgia in 2023⁹. Furthermore, in the report published following her visit to Brazil in 2024¹⁰, the Special Rapporteur identified the existence of extremely violent attacks, a high level of impunity, and, in certain cases, the direct involvement or complicity of State agents, or the tolerance of such acts by the authorities. These findings indicate that a climate characterised by public delegitimation, stigmatisation and insufficient institutional responses can gradually create conditions conducive to increased pressure on CSOs and those associated with them. In the absence of firm interventions, such contexts can degenerate into more serious forms of intimidation, criminalisation, or violence.

In this context, it is important to note that the methods used to exert this pressure are constantly evolving. The tools employed are becoming increasingly sophisticated and diverse. One of the many negative consequences of these actions is the constraint imposed on the CSOs and civic activists to self-censor or be less active¹¹. Experience in other countries shows that the systematic stigmatisation of the associative sector can be a precursor to acts of persecution by state agents¹².

This monitoring initiative is inspired by the experience of Hungary¹³, where the associative sector has been facing similar challenges for nearly a decade. The document is prepared and presented by the signatory organizations, listed at the end of the radiography.

⁹ Report of the UN Special Rapporteur on Human Rights Defenders October 30 – November 7, 2023, Visit to Georgia: <https://srdefenders.org/country-visit-report-georgia/>.

¹⁰ Report of the UN Special Rapporteur on Human Rights Defenders, 8–19 April 2024, visit to Brazil: <https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/4076488?v=pdf>. The next report, on the visit to Bosnia and Herzegovina (10–20 June 2025), is due to be presented to the UN Human Rights Council in March 2026 <https://srdefenders.org/bosnia-and-herzegovina-country-visit/>.

¹¹ 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/en/documents/act30/9647/2019/en/>.

¹² Buyse A., "Squeezing civic space: Restrictions on civil society organisations and the linkages with human rights", 2018, The International Journal of Human Rights, 22:8, pp. 966–988, available at: <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/13642987.2018.1492916>.

¹³ The Hungarian Helsinki Committee, Timelines of governmental attacks against NGOs, November 17, 2017, available online: <https://helsinki.hu/en/timeline-of-governmental-attacks-against-ngos/>.

The information provided is sourced from media outlets available online and public communication platforms. The monitoring was carried out throughout 2025 and in the first two months of 2026 and is not exhaustive.

If you have information that can be categorized as an attack on CSOs, please send it to contact@crjm.org for inclusion in the next monitoring report.

The list of signatories appears at the end of the document.

SUMMARY OF KEY FINDINGS IN 2025

Attacks against civil society organizations (CSOs), journalists, and human rights defenders (HRDs) in the Republic of Moldova in 2025 remained at levels comparable to those of 2024, although there was an increase in the complexity and diversity of the methods used.

Platforms such as Facebook, TikTok, Instagram, and YouTube¹⁴ remain the main channels used to disseminate disinformation and narratives aimed at discrediting the associative sector and civic actors. At the same time, Telegram channels, whose number and popularity have increased significantly in recent years, continue to rank among the most widely used sources of information in the Republic of Moldova. Anonymity, the lack of effective accountability mechanisms, and the coordinated amplification of identical messages across multiple channels facilitate the conduct of coordinated disinformation and smear campaigns.

During the period under review, more advanced forms of attacks were also observed, including the cloning of news portals on TikTok during electoral periods¹⁵, coordinated harassment of journalists and activists through fake accounts and defamatory comments, as well as the use of artificial intelligence technologies to manipulate the image and identity of journalists in fraudulent contexts. In this context, insufficient levels of media literacy, combined with the increasingly sophisticated use of digital tools, further increase the vulnerability of the information space and hinder the effective countering of such practices.

The attacks recorded throughout 2025 were concentrated around a number of significant events, such as the parliamentary elections of 28 September 2025, the first bilateral Republic of Moldova–European Union Summit of 4 July 2025, as well as the annual LGBT+ community festival in Moldova, “Moldova Pride”, held on 15 June 2025. In addition, at the beginning of 2025, following the suspension of USAID activities, an intensification of attacks against organizations benefiting from U.S. financial support was observed. This development also fuelled and reinforced conspiracy narratives regarding the alleged “external influence” over the Republic of Moldova. Smear campaigns intensified, targeting in particular civil society organizations and independent media outlets, especially those benefiting from USAID programmes, which were accused of serving foreign interests, while their activities were unfoundedly portrayed as “criminal.”

Concurrently, the attacks were frequently linked to sensitive topics such as justice reform, directly targeting civil society organizations and their representatives actively involved in promoting or monitoring this process. At the same time, media organizations and investigative journalists who documented alleged cases of corruption involving former or current public officials and politicians were subjected to recurrent attacks, particularly during electoral periods or in the context of public protests.

¹⁴Media Literacy Assessment in the Republic of Moldova, report prepared by Magenta Consulting for the Council of Europe, August 2025: <https://rm.coe.int/brochure-a4-media-literacy-assessment-in-the-rm-final-020925/488028300e>.

¹⁵The TikTok accounts of several news portals in the Republic of Moldova were cloned, 12 August 2025: <https://diez.md/2025/08/13/in-preajma-alegerilor-portalerile-de-stiri-din-moldova-sunt-clonate-pe-tiktok/>.

In this context, civil society organizations have continued to be stigmatized through narratives labelling them as “grant-eaters”, “NGO oligarchs”, a “cartel”, “criminal groups”, or as part of “globalist networks”. It is frequently alleged that they misappropriate funds intended for citizens, thereby portraying civil society as “a major problem” and its “removal” as “vital”. These narratives are further reinforced by recurrent legislative initiatives aimed at introducing a “foreign agent” status, which transforms international financial support into a basis for political stigmatization and public delegitimization.

Generally, civil society organisations are portrayed either as promoters of foreign interests or as “extensions of the government”, with references made to concepts such as the “NGO-ization of the State” or the “governmentalization of civil society”. The activity of public authorities is described as being influenced by a so-called “NGO-style” of governance, portrayed as inefficient and responsible for the deterioration of key sectors. These messages are accompanied by attacks targeting professionals who have transitioned from the civic sector to public office, including proposals to limit or exclude them from public functions through discriminatory criteria.

Since 2024, a distinct method of discrediting and undermining civil society in the Republic of Moldova has been identified. This method involves creating and using organisations that are presented as NGOs with social, educational or entertainment aims, but which, in reality, function as instruments of political groups. In the case of the organization “Evrazia”, this is not a hypothetical risk, but involves concrete activities of training and education targeting children, teachers, and young people, aimed at manipulating perceptions and enabling controlled mobilization. By contrast, in the case of certain associations involved in monitoring electoral processes, the risks primarily stem from a lack of transparency regarding funding, institutional capacity, and the actual purpose of their activities, thereby generating ambiguity and suspicion in the public space. These practices contribute to the delegitimation of genuine civil society and the erosion of trust in independent mechanisms for civic participation and democratic oversight.

The analysis also reveals a substantial number of cases of direct pressure being exerted on journalists and independent media organisations. This pressure is manifested through intimidation, discrediting, and restrictions on access to information. Explicit threats have been reported, including death threats, reputational blackmail, threats of criminal proceedings, as well as verbal or physical assaults in the field, including damage to equipment. Stigmatising public discourse has further contributed to the delegitimation of the press through extreme labelling and insinuations regarding alleged obscure financial interests, often in response to investigative reporting or uncomfortable questions.

At the institutional level, restrictions on journalists’ access to courts have been reported, as well as severe limitations in the Transnistrian region, including refusals of access, initiatives to sanction journalists without ‘accreditation’, and the conviction of HRDs on fabricated charges, followed by illegal detention in inhuman and degrading conditions. At the same time, stigmatizing and discriminatory discourse against HRDs, including attacks based on identity and sexual orientation, has been used as a tool of intimidation and discrediting, with an amplified impact when such messages originate from politicians or public figures.

In 2025, the civil society organisations and media outlets most frequently targeted by attacks included: the Institute for European Policies and Reforms (IPRE), the Legal Resources Centre from Moldova (LRCM), the WatchDog Community, and the Soros Foundation Moldova (SFM), which were accused of receiving “millions”, enjoying “luxury salaries” or possessing extravagant assets, and of misappropriating external funds that were, in fact, intended for citizens. They were also criticized for allegedly influencing decision-making processes or even “taking over” certain functions of public authorities, particularly in the context of justice reform and the external evaluation of judges and prosecutors.

IPRE continued to be targeted in connection with the scandal regarding the unlawful access to personal data during the competition for the position of Chief Prosecutor of the Prosecutor's Office for Combating Organized Crime and Special Cases (PCCOCS), as well as through allegations of a purported “strategic takeover” of the competences of public institutions and undue influence over reform processes. LRCM was labelled a “criminal group” and accused of involvement in alleged “money laundering” schemes involving external funds allocated to justice reform, as well as of associations with the ruling party. The SFM was described as a “globalist, satanist network” and accused of having “destroyed entire countries” through non-governmental organizations and “controlled media”, with the alleged aim of “draining” states such as the Republic of Moldova and Romania. The WatchDog Community was likewise targeted with allegations concerning external funding, being labelled as part of “organized criminal groups”, allegedly paid “huge sums” to “manipulate” public opinion.

At the same time, several independent media organisations, such as RISE Moldova, Ziarul de Garda (ZdG), Nokta.md, Laf.md, AGORA, the Independent Journalism Center (IJC), Cu Sens, TV8 and Jurnal TV, were targeted by attacks regarding their alleged political bias and association with the “government”. These outlets were accused of portraying political reality in a manner favourable to the authorities and of being funded by external partners. The attacks included the use of bot networks, AI-generated or manipulated content, and coordinated on-line manipulation campaigns.

Direct attacks were also launched against several journalists and HRDs, including ZdG journalists Măriuța Nistor, Igor Ionescu, and Natalia Zaharescu; TV8 journalists and documentary filmmakers Andrei Captarenco and Viorica Tătaru; investigative journalist Mariana Rață; the President of the Centre for Investigative Journalism, Cornelia Cozonac; Nokta.md editor-in-chief Mihail Sirkeli; Nokta journalist Vlada Verșinina; Radio Moldova Comrat journalist Elena Celac; Cu Sens journalist Malvina Cojocari; as well as the activist and director of Genderdoc-M, Angelica Frolov. These individuals were subjected to threats, including death threats, persistent harassment, and stigmatizing and defamatory labelling.

Among the politicians and public figures who have disseminated tendentious and defamatory information about civil society organizations and their representatives are Vlad Filat, Igor Dodon, Bogdan Țirdea, Ilan Șor, Tudor Ulianovschi, Dragoș Galbur, Renato Usatîi, Andrei Năstase, Irina Vlah, and Dorin Chirtoacă, thereby contributing to the amplification of a hostile climate towards independent media and the civic sector.

RADIOGRAPHY OF THE ATTACKS IN 2025

CATEGORY 1.

Delegitimisation of civil society and the media through financial narratives and claims of “foreign influence”

Some of the attacks in 2025 challenged the legitimacy of civil society organisations and the independent media by associating them with external funding, alleged foreign interests, or hidden political agendas. Recurring rhetoric promotes the idea that NGOs and media organisations are “grant-eaters”, “NGO oligarchs”, “criminal gangs”, “octopuses”, “cartels” or part of a “globalist” or “Satanist” network. It is frequently claimed that they receive “millions”, enjoy “luxury salaries or lifestyles”, “launder money” or misappropriate external funds intended for citizens. In some statements, civil society is portrayed as “a major problem,” and its “elimination” deemed “vital”. These narratives are further reinforced by recurrent legislative initiatives concerning the introduction of a “foreign agent” status, which seek to institutionalise suspicion towards entities receiving more than 50% external funding, thereby turning international financial support into an indicator of disloyalty or external interference.

The analysis shows that such messages aim to create a systemic perception that civil society and the media are motivated solely by financial gain and act on the basis of externally imposed agendas. In reality, external funding follows transparent procedures, subject to audit and legal regulations, while the involvement of civil society organizations in projects supported by external donors contributes to strengthening democracy and the rule of law. The automatic association of external support with a lack of legitimacy disregards the existing legal framework and the legitimate role of civil society as an essential actor in a democratic society.

21 January 2025

The Telegram channel Casa de nebuni (Madhouse) [published](#) an offensive and vulgar comment in response to a post by the LRCM regarding its main activities in 2024, which included, at the end, an informative note regarding the possibility of supporting the organisation’s activities via a dedicated link.

The comment uses offensive and degrading language, employing obscene expressions and derogatory labels directed at non-governmental organisations and the independent press. In the message, the NGOs and in particular the LRCM, the IPRE and the Executive Director of IPRE, Iulian Groza – as well as media outlets referred to as the “free press on the Bâc river” are associated with the practice of “begging” in the context of funding their activities, including through the mechanism of redirecting 2% of income tax.

21 January 2025

The former Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Moldova and leader of the European Social Democratic Party (PSDE), Tudor Ulianoschi, [expressed](#) his views on social media regarding the decision of the U.S. administration to temporarily [suspend](#) funding for U.S. external assistance programmes, describing this reassessment as “necessary”, including for the Republic of Moldova.

In his post, the PSDE leader argued that external funds, including those provided through US aid programmes, had been used to support a “civil society” organized “in line with cartel principles” that would serve ideological interests. He also claimed that the funding had targeted “the media subservient to certain political groups”, as well as one or more parties that had used these resources for their own ends, thereby fuelling “a veritable octopus” that “threatens democratic values and human dignity”.

According to Ulianoschi, both the US administration and Moldovan citizens have the right to know who received these funds and for what purposes they were spent.

30 January 2025

The former President of the Republic of Moldova, Igor Dodon, [commented](#) on the temporary suspension of US foreign aid programmes, including during the programme “По фактам” (*Based on Facts*), broadcast in Russian. In his remarks, Igor Dodon stated that “all Sorosites” and civil society should be subject to an audit to verify “what they spent the millions on”, claiming that in the Republic of Moldova “a new caste has formed – the NGO oligarchs”. He specified that it is the heads of these organisations who are “linked to the current government and influence it”.

Igor Dodon claimed that the large amounts of foreign funding had turned these organisations into a “very serious business” and that “Moldova’s state structures have been placed under the control of these organisations”. At the same time, he welcomed the US administration’s decision to suspend funding, stating that “now Trump has turned off their tap a little, and this will have a positive impact on the situation in Moldova”. During the same appearance, Igor Dodon used derogatory language targeting civil society organizations and media outlets, which he referred to as “grant-eaters.”

In the context of the intensification of public attacks against independent media and civil society, the former Head of the EU Delegation to the Republic of Moldova, Jānis Mažeiks, [condemned](#) the political use of the issue of external funding to intimidate and stigmatize journalists and NGOs. The official emphasised that threats, defamation, and the dissemination of false information are illegal and must be

investigated and punished. At the same time, he reiterated the EU's commitment to supporting the independent media and civil society, including investigative journalism and the fight against disinformation, as essential elements of a functioning democracy.

Jānis Mažeiks' statement [was subsequently criticised](#) by the leader of the PSDE, Tudor Ulianoschi, who argued that the so-called "independent media" and "civil society" are, in reality, partisan organizations serving the ruling party, acting as "instruments of pressure". He further claimed that these entities have used tools of intimidation and defamation against political opponents of those in power, including in the electoral context, and questioned the legitimacy of the external support provided to them. At the same time, Ulianoschi welcomed the willingness of the European Union to support the media and civil society, but argued that such funding should be distributed "equitably" and not directed exclusively to organizations that have previously benefited from external funding. He also called on EU representatives to consult opposition political parties when assessing the situation in the Republic of Moldova.

14 February 2025

Lawyer Vitali Catana [published](#) a post on his Facebook page targeting several journalists and civil society representatives in the context of the debates regarding the suspension and reassessment of U.S. external funding. The post was accompanied by [a photograph](#) of the President of the Centre for Investigative Journalism, Cornelia Cozonac, as well as ironic and stigmatizing comments.

In his message, Vitali Catana attacked what he called "Sorosites and USAID-ites", describing them as beneficiaries of "endless handouts" and claiming that it would be necessary to publish a "list of beneficiaries of the loot stolen from U.S. taxpayers".

The lawyer also made references to journalist Alexandru Cozer from Jurnal TV, suggesting that he had benefited from external funding which allegedly enabled him to purchase a car worth "several apartments and guesthouses". In the same context, the author of the post claimed that beneficiaries of external funding "have built houses, villas, Porsche cars, and wealth" and have become "the nabobs of the Moldovan media and influencer sphere", concluding that he wishes to see the lists of the so-called "Bolshevik 'independents'" published.

Historian Gheorghe Marzencu also [reacted](#) to the same post, arguing that such lists would not be made public in the run-up to an election period, "when journalists are as essential as the air we breathe". He claimed that media outlets such as TV8, Pro TV Chisinau and Jurnal TV had received funding amounting to millions of dollars from USAID. He also referred to the period of the Plahotniuc regime, claiming that

the same media institutions had ranked “among the top in terms of budgets”, and, with regard to Cornelia Cozonac, alleged that she had directly benefited from funding from European media institutions.

Cornelia Cozonac [responded](#) on her Facebook page, stating that the work of the Centre for Investigative Journalism is openly supported by international donors, a fact that has never been concealed, and emphasising that, without this support, investigative journalism in the Republic of Moldova would not exist at its current level, and numerous corruption schemes, conflicts of interest and human rights violations would not have been documented. She emphasised that all funds used have been reported and are public. She added that this is not the first time she has been the victim of such attacks, which over the years have included forms of personal intimidation, such as surveillance of her home and derogatory comments regarding her private life.

The posts and reactions in question form part of a stigmatising public discourse directed at journalists and civil society organisations, in which accusations are targeted on the use of external funding and imply the impression that they are acting as ‘foreign agents’ or pursuing hidden agendas.

21 February 2025

In the 21 February 2025 edition of the newspaper “МВ Ведомости”, an article [was published](#) containing direct attacks against civil society organizations and independent media in the Republic of Moldova, in particular investigative journalism. The article is illustrated with photographs of Cornelia Cozonac, President of the Centre for Investigative Journalism (CJI), and Alina Radu, Director of Ziarul de Gardă. It also mentions organizations and editorial offices such as Rise Project, Mold-Street, Moldova.org, and other media outlets presented as “independent”. The material further refers to attacks launched within the People’s Assembly of Gagauzia against the editorial teams of Nokta.md and Laf.md, stating, in a stigmatizing manner, that “the boomerang has returned”, with journalists labelled as “traitors”.

Under the headline “Грантоедов поставили в угол” (“Grant-eaters have been put in the corner”), the article uses derogatory and stigmatising language, portraying non-governmental organisations and media outlets as entities dependent on external funding, lacking legitimacy and motivated solely by financial gain. Without providing evidence, the author claims that the press and NGOs received “up to 70 per cent of their budget” from American sources and that the reduction in external funding has caused an alleged “existential crisis” for them. The article includes ironic and disparaging references to civil society’s reactions to recent attacks on the press, downplaying the

severity of the harassment of journalists and suggesting that these represent exaggerated reactions from people “accustomed to living off grants”.

In a response on [her Facebook page](#), Cornelia Cozonac described the article as part of a wider series of recurring attacks on investigative journalism, which have intensified in the run-up to the elections. She emphasised that the narrative regarding “grant-eaters” is the one established by Russian propaganda in the post-Soviet space and reiterated that the CIJ activity is funded transparently, through grants obtained in open competitions and with public reports. At the same time, the journalist noted that investigations carried out by the CIJ have documented Russian propaganda networks in the Republic of Moldova and have formed the basis for the initiation of several criminal cases in recent years.

24 February 2025

The President of Moldovan National Party, Dragos Galbur, [published](#) a post on his Telegram channel regarding the suspension of US-AID funding in the Republic of Moldova, which has affected several non-governmental organisations and independent media outlets. In the message, he claimed that external funding frequently ends up in “certain pockets”.

In particular, Dragos Galbur referred to the NGO Partnerships for the New Economy, founded by former Prime Minister Natalia Gavrilita and former Minister of Justice Sergiu Litvinenco. He claimed that the two had brought “no benefit to the government” and described the founders as “people who have failed in the economy and the justice system”. At the same time, the leader of Moldovan National Party claimed that the NGO was attracting “millions of Euros” in foreign funding and that these funds were being “pocketed” by the founders.

The post fits in with a stigmatising public discourse targeting non-governmental organisations, making general accusations regarding the use of external funding without citing any specific facts or findings by the competent authorities.

26 February 2025

The anonymous Telegram channel “Casa de Nebuni” (*Madhouse*), with around 15,000 followers, has published several posts denigrating civil society organisations and the independent press, targeting in particular the LRCM, the IPRE, Promo-LEX, Expert-Grup and TV8 (see examples [\[here\]](#), [\[here\]](#), [\[here\]](#) and [\[here\]](#)). The author of the posts uses stigmatising labels such as “OPG” (*organised criminal group*), “state within a state” or “foreign money eaters”, making accusations of corruption, “money laundering” and covert influence over media institutions.

Note: The messages suggest that external funding has been misappropriated for personal gain and compare funds allocated to NGOs with the state's social needs, in order to discredit the role of civil society. These posts fit in with a discourse aimed at delegitimising civil society and the independent press, promoting conspiracy theories and attempting to create the perception that NGOs have hidden political agendas or are receiving external funding illegitimately, particularly in an electoral context.

12 March 2025

The MP Renato Usatii [made](#) statements targeting non-governmental organisations and the independent media during the broadcast „Puterea e în adevăr”(Power Lies in Truth), in the context of the suspension of U.S. external funding. He claimed that the Action and Solidarity Party had lost the support of the press and NGOs, thereby questioning their independence and suggesting that they had been used to prop up the government.

In his remarks, Usatii linked NGOs to political and financial interests, arguing that, without U.S. funding, “they are no longer what they used to be”. At the same time, he resorted to stigmatising rhetoric directed at civil society, insinuating the existence of excessive financial benefits and a luxurious lifestyle among its representatives, as well as the fact that their refusal to take up employment in the public sector points to predominantly financial motivations.

Note: These statements, made in a generalising manner, form part of a broader discourse aimed at discrediting civil society and the independent press, which are portrayed as partisan actors that are dependent on external funding, particularly in the context of the suspension of USAID projects, including in the Republic of Moldova.

13 March 2025

The member of the Coalition for Unity and Welfare party, Ion Bulgac, posted stigmatising messages targeting civil society organisations on his Telegram page. In one of the posts, he described the LRCM, IPRE and Watchdog as “organised criminal groups”, a term frequently used in online discourse to discredit NGOs. The Telegram channel in question, which had nearly 1,000 followers, is no longer available.

The Telegram channel “Telegraph Moldova” published a denigrating message, accompanied by a photograph showing representatives of the LRCM, the Soros Foundation, Promo-LEX and IPRE during a visit to Brussels. The post claims that they had travelled there to “seek funds for the maintenance of the party press”, insinuating that any possible funding would be allocated to the IPRE or LRCM. The message is worded in an ironic and offensive manner, with the clear aim of discrediting the work of the organisations in question and speculatively linking them to political interests.

28 March 2025

Six MPs from the Party of Communists of the Republic of Moldova—Diana Caraman, Constantin Starîş, Inga Sibova, Nicolai Rusol, Valeriu Muduc, and Vladimir Voronin—registered in Parliament [a draft law](#) on the status of “foreign agents” in the Republic of Moldova.

The draft proposes the definition and mandatory registration of entities classified as “foreign agents”, namely natural or legal persons receiving at least 50% external funding and carrying out activities that may influence political, economic, social, or educational life. Such entities would be required to register in a special registry and to provide detailed reporting on their sources of funding and activities.. Annual and unannounced inspections are envisaged in this regard, as well as severe penalties – fines ranging from 50,000 to 200,000 MDL for failure to register, the freezing of accounts, the confiscation of undeclared funds, the suspension of activity or even the dissolution of the entity in the event of repeated violations.

The initiative has generated critical reactions from both [civil society](#) and certain [national authorities](#) and European officials. The Centre for Independent Journalism, together with other media organizations and 135 civil society organizations, [condemned the initiative](#), describing it as an attack on independent media and democracy and arguing that it is inspired by legislation promoted by autocratic regimes, such as that of the Russian Federation. Although, under the current parliamentary configuration, such proposals would have limited prospects of adoption, the organizations emphasized that its mere introduction represents a serious warning sign and called for the immediate withdrawal of the initiative.

In his turn, the European Union Ambassador to the Republic of Moldova, Jānis Mažeiks, [stated](#) that the draft law is incompatible with the fundamental values of the EU – democracy, the rule of law and media pluralism – and does not meet the expectations of a candidate country, emphasizing that respect for these values is non-negotiable.

6 April 2025

Former Prime Minister Vlad Filat made a series of [accusations](#) against certain non-governmental organizations on his Telegram page, with direct reference to the Institute for European Policies and Reforms (IPRE). He stated that the “so-called moral leaders” within NGOs represent “a major problem” and that “their elimination is vital”, accusing the organisations of taking over the mandate of the citizens and exerting illegitimate influence over decision-making processes in the Republic of Moldova. At the same time, Filat stated that he would continue to make information about their activity public, including through court proceedings.

In the post, he invoked the existence of a criminal case concerning the scandal over illegal access to personal data, referring to IPRE. He also accused the NGOs of being “paid with money that comes into the Republic of Moldova in the form of aid for the country”, but which goes towards “salaries for these NGO staff”.

Such [narratives were reiterated](#) by Vlad Filat both during the broadcast “Tema” (*Topic*) on Primul în Moldova TV and in another Facebook post, where he claimed that external funds, including through USAID, which had funded NGOs, had been used to provide media and political support to the ruling party. At the same time, he claimed that civil society representatives were receiving “considerable salaries” for activities which he ironically described as “research into where the wind blows in the morning, how it changes direction in the afternoon and then returns in the evening”, implying the lack of relevance and usefulness of their work.

23 July 2025

Politician Ion Bulgac (currently MAN/formerly CUB party) [launched an attack](#) on certain NGOs and civic initiatives (explicitly mentioning the IPRE, Watchdog, LRCM, Citizens for Europe / Moldova Decides), claiming that the “billions”/European funds do not reach the people (e.g. unpaid wages), but are instead channelled to “mercenaries” paid “crazy money” to “lie to the public”. The message frames European aid/loans as a scheme to corrupt public opinion and attempts to delegitimise NGOs through ‘mercenary’-style labelling, suggesting that they are instruments of the government propaganda („Moldova Poate”(‘Moldova Can’)).

Note: The attack combines the narrative of external influence through funding with the delegitimation and pejorative labelling of the CSOs and the insinuation of covert control over the government (category 3). The phrase “mercenaries”, “European money for them, not for the people” offers no evidence, but exploits social frustration to construct a false opposition between civil society and citizens. The aim is not policy debate, but the erosion of their legitimacy and the creation of a climate of generalised suspicion.

30 September 2025

The MP Vasile Costiuc, a member of the “Democracy at Home” parliamentary faction, [launched](#) defamatory accusations and statements against Soros Foundation in a video post on Facebook. Citing statements by the US President Donald Trump, he used offensive language against the organisation’s founder, George Soros, and his family, claiming that they had “destroyed entire countries” through non-governmental organisations and the “controlled media”, with the aim of “draining” states such as the Republic of Moldova and Romania. In the same statement, Costiuc described this alleged influence as a “globalist, satanic network”.

The message was shared by another MP from the same parliamentary faction, Alexandru Versinin, helping to amplify the stigmatising rhetoric against civil society and international philanthropic funding.

The statements are part of [a broader pattern](#) of public discourse promoted by Costiuc, who has repeatedly targeted civil society organisations with offensive remarks and attempts to delegitimise their role in the democratic domain.

22 October 2025

Former Prime Minister Vlad Filat [has launched](#) a new public attack on civil society organisations and the press, reviving a narrative he constantly promotes in the public space. In a post written in aggressive and disparaging language, he associates NGOs and the 'mainstream media' with the Action and Solidarity Party, suggesting that they have benefited from considerable financial resources, including through non-transparent mechanisms, claiming that they are 'tired of counting the money' or that 'considerable sums have been pumped in, not always via bank transfer, to cards'.

Note: Through these sweeping statements, Filat continues to promote a discourse that delegitimises civil society and the independent media, suggesting political affiliation, lack of integrity and their involvement in illicit practices. The message follows a repetitive pattern of stigmatising NGOs and undermining their legitimate role in a democratic society.

3 December 2025

The Telegram channel Casa de nebuni (*Madhouse*) [published](#) a post containing attacks on the LRCM, as well as on some former and current members of the organisation. In the post, the LRCM is labelled a "criminal group" and is accused, without any evidence, of involvement in alleged "money laundering" schemes involving foreign funds intended for justice reform, as well as in so-called "energy sector schemes". At the same time, members of the organisation are linked to alleged "dubious" tenders and political parties.

Note: This post constitutes an online smear campaign aimed at publicly discrediting of a civil society organisation, originates from an anonymous channel or the one affiliated with propaganda circles, with the goal of linking the organisation to criminal and political activities. It is an attack on civil society and its role in democratic processes, as it seeks to undermine credibility and public trust through serious, unsubstantiated allegations, with the potential to intimidate and delegitimise advocacy work.

CATEGORY 2.**Damaging the reputation and undermining the professional credibility of CSOs and HRDs**

Some of the analysed attacks directly target the reputation, competence, and professional credibility of civil society organisations and independent media platforms. The discourse resorts to sarcasm, derogatory labels, insinuations regarding the existence of hidden interests or ‘settling of scores’, as well as to wording of serious allegations without presenting evidence. Such interventions aim to undermine the public perception of their competence and credibility and, in certain contexts, may serve to divert public attention from other issues or possible illegalities associated with the individuals or groups behind these attacks.

In the absence of evidence or findings by the competent authorities, such statements remain mere speculation and cannot replace legal mechanisms of verification and accountability. Public criticism of the work of organisations or journalists is legitimate in a democratic society, but it must be based on verifiable facts and arguments, not on insinuations or labelling intended to damage professional reputation.

12 January 2025

Fugitive oligarch Ilan Șor [published](#) a message on social media containing offensive undertones targeting the StopFals platform, criticizing its activity in the field of fact-checking. In the post, he used ironic and derogatory language, suggesting a “rebranding” of the platform under the name “TopFals.md”.

The message primarily referred to StopFals materials concerning energy tariffs and inflation, insinuating that the platform disseminates incorrect information and stating, in an ironic manner, that Moldovan citizens “will appreciate its debunkings” after paying their electricity bills.

21 May 2025

The Telegram channel Ungureanu 112 [published](#) a defamatory message targeting the IPRE and its Executive Director, Iulian Groza, accusing the organisation of having drawn up a report with the aim of discrediting the acting chairperson of Chisinau Court, Constantin Damaschin, just before his external evaluation.

The post invokes the existence of links between Damaschin and an alleged criminal case concerning “treason and espionage”, in the context of a scandal involving the access of personal data by an alleged expert affiliated with the IPRE. The message uses vulgar and insinuating language, suggesting the existence of “personal vendettas” and an abuse of the justice system by the director of the IPRE. The post was subsequently reposted by other Telegram channels, including [Telegraph Moldova](#).

CATEGORY 3.

Portraying CSOs, NGOs, and the independent media as extensions of the government or political parties

In another series of attacks, civil society organisations, HRDs, and independent media outlets are portrayed as “extensions of power”, a “state within a state” or entities “controlled” by the government. Concepts such as “strategic silence”, “propaganda through silence”, “strategic lynching” or “strategic obedience” are invoked, suggesting that the press and NGOs protect the authorities, run campaigns on demand or justify reforms politically. At the same time, the concept of the “governmentalisation” or “NGO-isation” of the state is promoted, with the claim that these entities “take over the state’s functions”, occupy key positions in public institutions or decisively influence reform processes. In some statements, they are portrayed as “props” lacking autonomy, “controlled by those in power” or involved in shady funding. Against this backdrop, proposals have even been put forward to “de-NGO-ise” the state, to restrict civil society representatives’ access to public office through “specialised tests”, as well as legislative initiatives to extend the obligation to declare assets to journalists and NGO staff.

However, these claims ignore the legal framework governing the activities of non-governmental organisations and the media. CSOs and media institutions have no decision-making powers and cannot adopt public policies, appoint individuals to office or exercise public authority. Their participation in consultations, monitoring of reforms or provision of technical assistance takes place within the limits of the law and on the basis of transparent mechanisms recognised as good governance practices. The final decision rests exclusively with the state authorities, who bear full legal and political responsibility for the acts adopted.

5 February 2025

The former Deputy Prime Minister of the Republic of Moldova, Andrei Nastase, [published](#) a post on his Facebook page in which he levelled accusations against certain non-governmental organisations and media outlets.

In his statements, he claimed the existence of a mechanism he termed ‘strategic silence’ or ‘propaganda through silence’, whereby certain NGOs and media outlets would deliberately avoid addressing issues of major public interest. He linked this alleged phenomenon to both previous and current governments, claiming that it works regardless of the political context.

At the same time, Andrei Nastase cited a second mechanism, referred to as “strategic lynching”, through which, according to his claims, journalists and media organisations run smear campaigns on demand. In this context, he used stigmatising language, describing some journalists as “media mercenaries” and claiming that “killer NGOs” were “controlled by those in power” and involved in shady funding and political influence.

He also referred to an alleged phenomenon of “strategic obedience”, whereby certain civil society organisations and analysts would justify the government’s actions, including in sensitive issues such as freedom of expression, justice or the fight against corruption, presenting them as compliant with European standards. Finally, Andrei Nastase described these groups as a “new generation of propagandists”, suggesting that they determine who is allowed to operate in the public space and who should be “silenced”.

20 February 2025

The Association of Administrative Lawyers of Moldova (AJAM), in partnership with the Friedrich Ebert Stiftung Foundation, launched the study entitled “[*The Phases of Pre-Vetting – The Unseen Side of Justice Reform*](#)”, which analyzes the pre-vetting process carried out in the Republic of Moldova during the period March 2022 – November 2024. The study includes an examination of the stages of the procedure, the challenges raised by candidates, and a number of procedural shortcomings that have generated controversy.

The study includes statements and interpretations regarding certain civil society organisations, in particular the LRCM and IPRE, in the context of their role in monitoring and supporting reforms in the justice sector. In this regard, the authors of the study have made a series of allegations that indirectly suggest the existence of conflicts of interest, disproportionate influence over the pre-vetting process, and privileged links with the current government. These allegations present the organisations in question as having the capacity to influence the Pre-vetting Commission and the vetting process beyond their legitimate role as civil society actors.

In the case of the IPRE, the study argued that certain public activities of the organisation may have created the impression of substituting the functions of public institutions involved in pre-vetting, citing appointments or collaborations between the IPRE representatives and the Pre-vetting Commission. With regard to the LRCM, the document stated that the high level of public communication in support of the external evaluation had reinforced the perception of direct involvement in the process. This was achieved through references to individuals associated with the organisation who had reportedly been active within the Commission or its secretariat, fuelling the idea of influence being exerted 'behind the scenes'.

The authors of the study argued in the conclusions that the credibility and legitimacy of the pre-vetting process had been undermined in these situations, citing the risks of the 'governmentalisation' of civil society. Their claims were based predominantly on perceptions and suspicions.

In response, the IPRE [publicly rejected the accusations](#), emphasising that the vetting of judges and prosecutors had been carried out in line with the recommendations of Venice Commission, with the support of international partners and under the monitoring of the European Commission.

Furthermore, the Pre-vetting Commission [described the analysis](#) as one-sided and methodologically flawed, stating that it contained false, misleading and speculative claims.

26 February 2025

The former mayor of Chisinau, Dorin Chirtoaca, [launched attacks](#) against civil society and the media, levelling accusations regarding their alleged alignment with the current government.

In his statements, Dorin Chirtoaca claimed that the traditional role of civil society had been reversed, arguing that the press had become the “advocate of the ruling power” and that there was a “controlled press”. He added that such situations would generate disgust among citizens and contribute to a decline in voter turnout, particularly among pro-European and unionist voters.

The message was issued in response to the publication of a poll conducted by the IMAS company which predicted the membership of the future Parliament.

The statements fit in with a stigmatising discourse targeting civil society and the media, suggesting a lack of independence on their part and attributing a political role to them in the electoral context.

1 March 2025

[A post](#) targeting the IPRE was published on the SPPOT Telegram channel, accompanied by an attachment referring to a project implemented by the organisation, funded by the Kingdom of the Netherlands, aimed at providing communication support and consultancy to the Ministry of Justice.

Although the document explicitly mentions support for strengthening the strategic communication capacity of the ministry, the author of the post interprets the collaboration as a substitution of the public institution’s duties, suggesting, among other things, that the NGO would control official messages regarding vetting and justice reform, without distinguishing between technical assistance and the formal delegation of powers.

The post was subsequently shared and commented on across several Telegram channels. The MP Bogdan Tirdea [backed](#) this narrative, claiming that, under the given project, the IEPR would develop and coordinate the Ministry of Justice’s communication strategy. At the

same time, he claimed that the draft would also include activities to monitor certain legal professions which, according to his statements, should be the responsibility of the state institutions. In this context, the politician raises questions regarding the impartiality of communication and the impact of such collaboration on public perception.

The message [was](#) also reposted by the Telegram channel Casa de nebuni (*Madhouse*), which accompanied the post with a vulgar and inciting comment, describing the LRCM and the IPRE as “criminal organisations”. The use of such defamatory labels is a recurring practice on this channel. This post continues a discourse of demonising and delegitimising civil society organisations, using extremely harsh labels, and groundless accusations.

4 March 2025

The former Prime Minister of the Republic of Moldova, Vlad Filat, [launched](#) a public attack on the IPRE via a post on his Facebook page, in which he brought accusations regarding an alleged “takeover of state functions” by non-governmental organisations. Although IPRE is directly targeted, the message extends the accusations to other civil society organisations, including Expert-Grup, the LRCM, as well as to the civil society in general.

In the post, Filat refers to a phenomenon he calls the “governmentalisation of civil society”, claiming that NGO representatives have been systematically appointed to key positions in public institutions and various committees, which, in his opinion, leads to the capture of state institutions. He insinuates that such appointments are politically motivated and related to the support for the ruling party, describing some NGOs as “oligarchic”.

In particular, the IPRE is labelled a “personal data raider,” and the activities carried out as part of projects funded by international partners are presented in a distorted manner, suggesting that they would be equivalent to illegal access to data, taking over the duties of public institutions, or exerting influence on reform processes. The technical and communication support provided to state institutions is tendentiously described as a ‘strategic takeover’ of the Ministry of Justice. Cooperation with other NGOs in monitoring the implementation of EU recommendations is presented as an attempt to take over the functions of public authorities, as well as a feigned independence in evaluating government reforms.

In response, the Executive Director of the IPRE, Iulian Groza, [emphasised](#) that the support provided to public institutions is strictly technical and advisory in nature, carried out with the backing of the development partners of the Republic of Moldova, and represents standard practice in European democracies. At the same time, he recalled that

even during the period when Vlad Filat held the position of the Prime Minister, the Government benefited from the support of non-governmental organisations and international partners, including through institutionalised consultation mechanisms.

21 March 2025

The former Bashkan of the ATU of Gagauzia, Irina Vlah, [launched a public attack](#) on civil society organisations through an article published on her official website, a message subsequently amplified by [a video](#) she released. The text promotes a narrative of the "NGO-isation of the state", presenting the involvement of the representatives of the non-governmental sector in public institutions as a harmful phenomenon, responsible for systemic malfunctions and transformation of the Republic of Moldova into a "giant NGO".

According to Irina Vlah, the activity of public authorities has been influenced by an "NGO-style" approach to governance, which focuses on attracting external resources. This has allegedly led to an increased dependence on loans, a rise in public debt, ineffective strategies, and high public sector salaries "comparable to those in NGOs". At the same time, she argues that former NGO representatives who have entered public office tend to replicate practices common in the non-governmental sector, citing excessive spending, frequent travel, and the inefficient use of public resources.

Furthermore, the text asserts that NGOs have "replaced" state structures, taken over government functions and gained unjustified access to sensitive information, including personal data and restricted-access information. The decline in "most key areas" is attributed to an alleged process of "forced NGO-ization," which is compared to the oligarchization of the state, reinforcing a narrative that delegitimizes civil society and portrays it as a threat to democratic governance.

Finally, the article advocates for a process of "de-NGO-ization," calling for a curtailment of the role of civil society organizations and the requirement for their representatives to pass "specialized tests" before accessing public office. Such an approach raises questions regarding respect for the principles of pluralism, civic participation and the legitimate role of the civil society in a democracy.

24 March 2025

Former Prosecutor General and former candidate for the presidency, Alexandr Stoianoglo, [has made](#) stigmatizing and delegitimizing statements about civil society organizations and the media, denying the very existence of a genuine civil society in the Republic of Moldova and asserting that, although there are numerous NGOs, they are merely a "decoration" and lack any real role in public control.

According to Stoianoglo, civil society organisations are more focused on the interests of external donors and grants than on the needs of citizens, 'imitating' the functions of a civil society which, in his opinion, no longer exists. In the same discourse he accused the press and NGOs of unconditional support for the current government and claimed that their silence, in the context of alleged pressure on the opposition and the media, would confirm that they had abandoned their critical role.

These statements fit into a broader narrative aimed at undermining the legitimacy of civil society and the independent press, which are portrayed as lacking autonomy and beholden to external or political interests.

31 March 2025

Former Prime Minister Vlad Filat [has launched a new attack](#) on civil society organisations in a post entitled "DEEP STATE", in which he reiterates and amplifies narratives aimed at delegitimising NGOs. He cites a speech by academician Frank Furedi in the European Parliament to support the argument that NGOs constitute an "unelected class" that influences public policy.

In his message, Filat agrees with the claims that NGOs 'have no organic connection with the people they claim to represent' and are, in reality, 'extensions of the government'. He describes their designation as non-governmental organisations as 'an Orwellian lie'. By adopting and amplifying extremely harsh language, even if it does not originate directly from him, including expressions such as "parasites living off the backs of taxpayers" and the idea that Europe's sovereignty depends on their exclusion, Vlad Filat contributes to promoting a stigmatising and demonising discourse against civil society, presenting NGOs as illegitimate actors harmful to the sovereignty of states.

24 June 2025

On his Telegram channel the MP Bogdan Tirdea [launched an attack](#) against several civil society organisations – including the LRCM, the IPRE, Promo-LEX, the Center for Policies and Reforms from Moldova (CPR), and the Soros Foundation Moldova – in response to their public appeal calling on the Government and Parliament to ensure a transparent and merit-based process for the appointment of the Constitutional Court judges.

In his message, the MP described the organisations as "participants in the process of state capture" and claimed that their leaders control key institutions such as the Central Electoral Commission, the Supreme Court of Justice, the Ministry of Economy and the Supreme Security Council. The post was written in a disparaging tone, suggesting that the public appeal was "a circus", and was worded in a manner intended to discredit the initiative and those involved.

25 May 2025

Actor Sergiu Voloc, who recently joined the “Moldova Mare” Party (Greater Moldova party), [made](#) stigmatising remarks about non-governmental organisations, claiming that they were overly involved in politics and were influencing state decisions. In his remarks, Voloc stated that he wants the Republic of Moldova to have “more control over its own interests and decisions than NGOs”, arguing that many of them are “involved in politics” and are “criminal and faulty by nature”.

The statements were made during a conference organized by the party and are consistent with the message promoted by the party, which focuses on sovereignty and the idea that political processes in the country are influenced by external actors, including through rhetoric that seeks to delegitimize civil society organizations.

17 July 2025

Politician Renato Usatii stated in [public remarks](#) that “NGOs affiliated with the government” had exerted pressure to cancel the concert by British artist Sting, scheduled for 27 July in Chisinau using political attacks and falsehoods. In the video, Usatii uses offensive language and makes derogatory remarks about NGOs, suggesting that they have received substantial funding.

Note: This statement constitutes an attack on NGOs, as it calls into question their independence and legitimacy, suggesting that they are politically controlled or work exclusively in the interests of the government. It is extremely harmful rhetoric, as it undermines trust in civil society, spreads populist narratives and distracts attention from real issues.

These statements cast doubt on the integrity of non-governmental organisations from Moldova without providing specific evidence. Such claims can undermine public trust in civil society and discourage civic participation. Groundless criticism may also harm the collaboration between civil society and state institutions, which is essential for the development of a democratic society.

23 September 2025

The president of Moldovan National Party, Dragos Galbur, [announced](#) that he had cancelled his appearance on a broadcast by ProTV, invoking the presence of journalists from Ziarul de Garda, whom he accused of having become a “propaganda tool of the government” and of publishing manipulative material about him. He claimed to be the target of a coordinated smear campaign “orchestrated by PAS through media outlets such as TV8, Agora and Ziarul de Garda” and fake social media accounts, comparing the current situation to the period of media control between 2012 and 2019. In his statements, he also associated journalists with “propaganda”, “dirty tricks” or “public lynching”.

Such statements, particularly when made by political leaders, contribute to the delegitimisation of the press and the erosion of public trust in media institutions. At the same time, associating the independent press with the authorities or the ruling party distorts public perception of the role and independence of the media.

12 December 2025

The MP from Alternativa faction, Ion Chicu, has tabled [a bill](#) requiring journalists funded from public money, employees of the NGOs funded from the state budget or external grants, as well as individuals paid from state-managed external assistance projects, to submit declarations of assets and personal interests. In principle, the proposal aimed to extend the asset declaration regime, which is currently specific to civil servants, to media and civil society employees who manage or benefit from public or external funds through the state.

The Government of the Republic of Moldova issued [a negative opinion](#) on the draft bill, arguing that extending the list of persons subject to the regime would overburden the National Integrity Authority and create additional administrative difficulties.

Note: The initiative represents a type of legislative pressure attack on the press and civil society, originating from the political area, which may have the effect of intimidating and discouraging criticism of the authorities. It is problematic from the perspective of press freedom and freedom of association if the proposed obligations are not justified by clear criteria of proportionality, as they may create an excessive regime of control and stigmatisation of independent actors.

CATEGORY 4.

Direct attacks against independent media in the exercise of their profession

The analysed cases reflect a pattern of direct pressure on journalists and independent media organisations through intimidation and denigration messages, including threats of criminal proceedings or death, as well as verbal and physical aggression. Public discourse frequently resorts to labels such as ‘media brothel’, ‘PAS henchmen’, ‘grant-eaters’ or accusations of alleged shady interests, particularly in response to investigations and critical reporting. At the same time, institutional restrictions are also reported, such as limiting journalists’ access to the courts. Overall, these actions go beyond the scope of legitimate criticism and tend to have an intimidating effect, discouraging the free exercise of the journalistic profession.

4 February 2025

The former Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs and European Integration, Valeriu Ostalep, [launched](#) a public campaign of attacks against journalist Zoya Dubaeva and the editorial team of Nokta through multiple posts on Telegram and other social media platforms. He repeatedly published personal photographs of the journalist, accompanied by insinuations that she and the editorial team promote the “Russian world”, thereby calling into question the credibility of her journalistic work.

Within approximately 24 hours, Ostalep shared nearly 20 posts and reposts, amplifying the attack, which was subsequently taken up by other public figures and supporters, including a municipal councillor from Comrat, a supporter of the socialists, lawyer Vladimir Cimpoes, who shared the post without comment, the former director of Primul Post TV in Transnistria, Elena Pahomova, as well as Vitalii Voznoi, who self-identifies as a civic activist.

These actions were triggered by a report by Nokta referring to an investigation regarding the Ostalep brothers’ business deals. In this context, Valeriu Ostalep continued to publish photographs of the journalist, accompanied by disparaging comments such as: “The ‘poetess’ from Balti has suddenly ‘written’ an ‘investigation’ about weapons and some absurd topics, which she clearly knows nothing about.” Alongside the disparaging comments, he also initiated legal proceedings against the editorial office.

The editorial board of Nokta described these actions as a coordinated campaign of harassment and discrediting, intended to undermine public trust in the independent press.

15 February 2025

During the Congress of Deputies and Representative Authorities of Gagauzia, held in Comrat, the editorial boards of Nokta.md and Laf.md, as well as the journalists of these media outlets present at the event, [were targeted by public attacks](#) launched by Boris Novak, a former member of the People’s Assembly of Gagauzia. From the podium, he called for general contempt towards journalists, particularly

those from Gagauzia, labelling them as “commissioned and paid media” and “traitors of the Gagauz people”, allegedly acting against its interests. The message was tacitly supported or endorsed through applause and non-verbal gestures by other representatives of the Gagauz authorities present at the event, including Dmitri Constantinov, President of the People’s Assembly of Gagauzia, and the Bashkan, Evghenia Guțul.

During the same event, journalist Elena Celac from Radio Moldova Comrat was the target of [threatening remarks](#) from the Bashkan’s adviser and head of media relations, Mihail Vlah, who stated that she “will soon disappear” (“Елена, скоро вас не будет!”).

Subsequently, several media organisations [signed](#) a joint statement condemning this behaviour, emphasising that journalists deemed troublesome in Gagauzia are frequently subjected to pressure from local government officials, contrary to the provisions of the Law on Freedom of Expression. The signatories called on the authorities concerned to act in accordance with democratic standards, to cease showing of intolerance and to issue a public apology to the media organisations and journalists affected.

The Ombudsman, Ceslav Panico, also [condemned](#) the attacks, stating that Boris Novak’s statements constitute a form of incitement to harassment of the press and undermine freedom of expression. The Ombudsman recommended that the People’s Assembly of the Autonomous Territorial Unit (ATU) of Gagauzia issue apologies to the editorial teams of Nokta.md and Laf.md, comply with parliamentary ethical standards, and adopt measures to protect media rights, requesting to be informed within one month of the actions taken.

12 February 2025

CU SENS journalist Malvina Cojocari [was assaulted and intimidated](#) by several supporters of the Bashkan of the Autonomous Territorial Unit (ATU) of Gagauzia, Evghenia Guțul, during a protest held in front of the Chișinău Court, Buiucani District. The protesters verbally abused the journalist, shoved her and tried to snatch the sheets of notes from her hand while she was carrying out her professional duties. Although police officers and carabinieri were present in the area, they did not intervene to ensure the journalist’s safety or to prevent the incident from escalating.

Following the incident, the editorial board of CU SENS media outlet published a public statement calling on the General Inspectorate of Police and the General Inspectorate of Carabinieri to ensure the protection of journalists during protests and other public events and to intervene promptly in situations where their physical and moral integrity is endangered.

On the same day, several non-governmental media organizations signed [a joint statement](#) condemning the unlawful behaviour of some supporters of Evghenia Gutul towards representatives of the press. The signatories emphasised that the protesters' actions constituted a violation of the right to physical integrity, individual freedom and personal safety, as well as a serious interference with the special rights guaranteed to journalists, stressing that such acts could not be tolerated.

On 24 March, two activists from the political bloc 'Victory', affiliated with the fugitive politician Ilan Șor, [filed complaints with the police](#) against the editorial board of CU SENS media outlet, accusing it of defamation in connection with the public reaction to the intimidation of journalist Malvina Cojocari. Subsequently, one of them filed a further complaint with the police after the editorial board publicly announced that it had been sued by the same two individuals.

The incident occurred in the context of court hearings in the case in which the Bashkan Evghenia Gutul is accused of the offence of illegal financing of political parties. Several journalists covering the proceedings in the so-called "Gutul Case" reported similar instances of intimidation and pressure, both from protesters and from politicians affiliated with Ilan Șor who were present at the scene.

19 February 2025

The former Prime Minister of the Republic of Moldova and President of the Party of the Development and Consolidation of Moldova (PDCM), Ion Chicu, has repeatedly made offensive public statements against certain media outlets and journalists.

In a post on his Facebook page, he [reacted](#) to an invitation from TV8 to appear on the broadcast "Cutia Neagră" (Black Box), hosted by Mariana Rata, describing the channel as a "media brothel" and claiming that it did not deserve "people's attention".

Subsequently, in the context of the debates sparked by the attacks against the editorial boards of Nokta.md and Laf.md at the People's Assembly of Gagauzia, Ion Chicu published further derogatory messages. In response to the Ombudsman's standpoint, which condemned these attacks, he [insulted the journalists](#), calling them "scoundrels" and "PAS henchmen" and accusing them of "psychological mockery of the people". He also labelled a journalist from Ziarul de Garda a "grant-eater".

Media organisations [condemned](#) these statements and called on the former prime minister to issue a public apology to the editorial boards concerned and to adopt a discourse in line with standards of respect and tolerance towards the press.

26 February 2025

The Director of the Clinical Hospital in Balti, Gheorghe Brînză, [issued multiple threats](#) and exerted pressure against NordNews journalists following the publication of an investigation concerning a potential conflict of interest related to the employment of his father-in-law. The author of the article and the editorial producer received aggressive calls and messages, including statements with threatening undertones referring to possible “revenge” should the relative in question experience health problems.

The editorial board reported that attempts to obtain an official statement were ignored, and that the pressure allegedly continued, including through third parties. Following these incidents, NordNews media portal filed a complaint with Balti Police Inspectorate regarding the intimidation of journalists and notified the National Integrity Authority of a possible conflict of interest, whilst also announcing that it would continue investigations into the hospital management’s activities.

27 February 2025

A security guard of the building of the Executive Committee of the ATU of Gagauzia [physically and verbally assaulted and intimidated](#) the filming team of the CU SENS platform, consisting of freelance journalist Elena Celac and cameraman Serghei Aga. The incident occurred in the context of documenting the activities of the authority and attending a public meeting. The guard prohibited filming, including from outside the building, unjustifiably invoking the need for prior authorization, and called the emergency service (112). Police officers who arrived at the scene drew up a report and confirmed that the journalists were entitled to continue their work.

Media non-governmental organizations [condemned](#) the unlawful conduct of the guard, emphasizing that his actions constitute a violation of the right to physical integrity and personal liberty, affecting the safety of the individuals concerned, as well as a serious interference with the exercise of freedom of the press. They called on law enforcement authorities to sanction the perpetrator for the intentional obstruction of media activity. They further requested that the State Enterprise “Servicii Pază” under the Ministry of Internal Affairs examine the case from a disciplinary perspective, and that the Executive Committee of Gagauzia ensure that its representatives comply with the law in their interactions with media institutions and journalists.

7 March 2025

Journalists from Ziarul de Garda (ZdG), Mariuta Nistor and Igor Ionescu, [were physically and verbally assaulted](#) while covering a protest organised outside Chisinau Court for Buiucani District in support of the fugitive MP Alexandr Nesterovschi, who was under criminal investigation for passive corruption and for accepting funding for a political party from an organised criminal group.

According to the editorial board, the reporters were initially subjected to insults and ungrounded accusations of being ‘funded from a criminal group’, with reference made to the USAID. Subsequently, the attacks escalated: a female protester struck reporter Mariuta Nistor in the chin, the cameraman Igor Ionescu was also assaulted, and the editorial board’s filming equipment was damaged. Following the attacks, ZdG representatives alerted the police and filed a complaint.

Several media organisations [have publicly condemned](#) the protesters’ unlawful behaviour towards ZdG journalists, describing the actions as serious violations of the right to physical integrity, personal safety and press freedom. In the light of the recurrence of such incidents and the perception of impunity, the organisations called on the authorities to investigate the incidents promptly, hold the attackers accountable and adopt effective measures to prevent and counter attacks against journalists, particularly during demonstrations associated with the network of the fugitive politician Ilan Şor.

31 March 2025

The Council for the Promotion of Investment Projects of National Importance (CPIPNI) has decided on a further temporary suspension of the broadcasting licence for TVC21 television station. The decision was motivated by the lack of complete documentation and ‘conclusive information’ regarding the shareholders and ownership structure of the company that owns the station. The authorities [stated](#) that the measure is strictly administrative in nature and does not concern the station’s editorial content or journalistic activity, as no irregularities were found in the programmes broadcast. The suspension is temporary and can be resolved by submitting the requested information.

In response, the Centre for Independent Journalism (CIJ), alongside other signatory organisations, [issued a statement](#) expressing concern over the CPIPNI application of this mechanism for suspending or revoking licences of audiovisual media service providers in the absence of a court decision. The organisations reiterated that similar mechanisms had previously been declared [unconstitutional](#) and contravene international standards on freedom of expression guaranteed by Article 10 of the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR).

At the same time, they emphasised that the temporary suspension of a television station’s broadcasting licence constitutes a serious interference with the right to freedom of expression, and that the application of such a measure for failure to fulfil administrative obligations is, in this case, manifestly disproportionate and contrary to the legitimate interests protected in a democratic society. They also highlighted the lack of transparency in the process of drafting and adopting the new legal mechanism applied by the CPIPNI, the risk of these practices, which have been declared unconstitutional, being replicated in the fu-

ture, as well as the need to bring legislation in line with constitutional and international standards on freedom of expression.

The CIJ reaction comes in the context of the suspension of licences [for over 30 television and radio stations](#) by the CPIPNI, a mechanism described as alarming even by [the European Commission](#).

3 April 2025

The former Bashkan of Gagauzia and leader of the Republican Party „Inima Moldovei” (*Heart of Moldova*), Irina Vlah, as well as other members of her team, [verbally attacked and intimidated](#) Ziarul de Garda reporter Natalia Zaharescu during a [press briefing](#). Instead of answering questions regarding the presence in her initiative group of former candidates from parties affiliated with Ilan Șor, Irina Vlah denied the information and described the publication as a “government newspaper”, suggesting the existence of political funding.

Other members of her team hurled direct insults at the journalist, questioned her legitimacy and made unfounded accusations. The briefing was cut short before the reporter could continue her questions, thereby preventing her from carrying out her journalistic duties. Subsequently, Irina Vlah published images and messages denigrating ZdG and the reporter, stating that they had been the victims of “new falsehoods launched by journalists controlled by PAS”, thereby amplifying the public attack against the media outlet.

After [publicly expressing solidarity](#) with Ziarul de Garda reporter Natalia Zaharescu and criticising the behaviour of the former Bashkan of Gagauzia, the founder of Nokta portal, Mihail Sirkeli, [became](#), the target of a coordinated intimidation campaign on the same day. He received hundreds of messages containing insults and threats from suspicious accounts, apparently operated by bots, on Telegram, Viber, and via SMS, as well as numerous calls from foreign numbers. The attack lasted approximately 24 hours, and the journalist stated that he sees a direct link between these actions and his publicly expressed critical standpoint with regard to Irina Vlah.

8 April 2025

The Superior Council of Magistracy (SCM) [approved](#) a framework regulation on access to court premises, which introduced new restrictions on journalists’ activity. Although the document has not yet been published in the Official Gazette, the draft was previously posted on the SCM website in a section with low visibility, without any real consultation with media organisations or experts in the field. The regulations make press access to court hearings conditional upon approval by the court’s management, based on a written request submitted, as a rule, 24 hours in advance and stating the purpose of the visit. For audio/video recordings during hearings, the media must notify the court. In emergency situations or if the request is submitted late, ac-

cess for filming is permitted only depending on available space. The courts' relationship with the press is further governed by the [SCM–Media Guide 2016](#).

The Centre for Independent Journalism and media organisations [have condemned](#) the SCM's decision, describing the regulations as abusive and incompatible with press freedom. Whilst they considered it legitimate to regulate access with the view to maintain order in the courts, they specified that the disproportionate restrictions and the lack of consultation with the press undermine the journalistic role of informing the public about the administration of justice. In this context, the CIJ called for the cancellation of the SCM's decision and a review of the regulations in consultation with media representatives.

Following public reactions, the SCM [stated](#) that the approved regulations were aimed exclusively at maintaining public order, the safety of participants and the solemnity of judicial proceedings, citing the status of courts as critical infrastructure and recurring issues of security, harassment and space availability, in particular in high-profile cases. The Council rejected claims concerning restrictions on press freedom, arguing that the requirement to request access in advance serves an organizational purpose and that the regulations would grant the media preferential treatment, given that only media representatives would be permitted to make audio and video recordings. Furthermore, the SCM announced a review of the Guidelines on Relations with the Media and the publication of the final text of the regulations once drafting is complete.

16 May 2025

Nokta journalist Vlada Verșinina [was removed](#) from a public hearing in the case concerning the Bashkan of Gagauzia, Evghenia Guțul, at the request of the latter's lawyer. The defence counsel argued that the reporter had allegedly made unauthorized audio recordings, invoking the fact that her articles contained quotations that were "too precise" to have been reproduced without a recording device. The prosecutor did not identify any irregularities, and the journalist requested to present her notes, including time markings demonstrating real-time drafting; however, the court refused to hear her, on the grounds that she was not a party to the proceedings.

Subsequently, on 19 May, the journalist requested the document restricting her access, but this was not provided to her. On 23 May, Judge Ana Cucerescu verbally reiterated the ban for the entire trial duration, informing her of her exclusion from the entire trial proceedings without issuing a written legal document.

As a result, the Centre for Independent Journalism [submitted a petition](#) to the Superior Council of Magistracy, requesting that it initiate

proceedings ex officio and examine the case, on the grounds that the situation constitutes an unjustified restriction of media access to proceedings of major public interest and sets a dangerous precedent for the transparency of justice.

20 June 2025

The presenter of the broadcast “Rezoomat” (*Summary*) on Realitatea TV, journalist Ileana Pirgaru, [has been](#) sued by Moldova Mare (*Greater Moldova*) Party, led by former prosecutor Victoria Furtuna, after she stated in a recent episode that the party was the successor to Șor Party, which had been declared unconstitutional.

In a petition signed by the party leader, she claimed that the journalist had presented “a falsehood as the truth”, demanding a public retraction of the statements in the same broadcast. The party denied any connection with Ilan Șor or his entourage.

Note: Although a political party has the right to defend its reputation in court, legal action taken against journalists for statements made in the context of political debate can have a chilling effect on the press and must be analysed with caution, given the wide margin of permissible criticism of political figures.

23 June 2025

Journalists from Fara Filtre (*Filters Off*) media project [were physically](#) and verbally assaulted during the protest organised by the Socialist Party on 23 June, whilst they were covering the event. Reporter Constantin Niculae was shoved, and journalist Veronica Gherbovetchi was subjected to intimidation and aggression by some participants, thereby being obstructed in the exercise of their journalistic duties in a matter of public interest.

The Centre for Independent Journalism, together with the co-signing non-governmental media organizations, [strongly condemned](#) these actions, describing them as a violation of the right to integrity and safety, as well as a serious interference with the press freedom. The organisations called on the authorities to investigate the incidents and hold those responsible to account. They also called on the political parties organising the protests to publicly condemn the attacks on journalists, and to promote discourse that respects the role of the press in a democratic society.

28 June 2025

The Director of the District Palace of Culture “Nicolae Lupu” in Rezina, Angela Racu, allegedly [attempted to exert intimidation](#) and pressure on the editorial team of “Rezina în Obiectiv” (*Rezina in Focus*) media outlet following the publication of an investigation carried out under the “Integrity CV” project. The investigation documented several aspects related to the official’s integrity, including the employment of her husband within the institution she managed and the failure to declare certain in-

come derived from artistic activities, a situation that was subsequently rectified through the submission of an updated asset declaration.

According to the editorial team, 48 days after the publication of the material, journalist Andrei Bordian received a phone call from Angela Racu, during which she allegedly requested the publication of a new article in a specific wording, warning that otherwise “I will write everywhere and you will be removed from projects and from everywhere”. The conversation was reportedly terminated without allowing for dialogue or the possibility to request further clarifications.

The Executive Director of the Association of Independent Press (API), Petru Macovei, described her conduct as reprehensible and incompatible with the status of a public official. The case highlights the vulnerability of journalists to pressure and the need for strict respect of legal guarantees concerning freedom of the press.

1 July 2025

The leader of the “Șansă” (Chance) Party, Alexei Lungu, affiliated with Ilan Șor, [intimidated and threatened](#) ZdG journalist Măriuța Nistor at the premises of the Chișinău Court, Buiucani District, in the context of a hearing in the case concerning the Bashkan of Gagauzia, Evghenia Guțul. He stated that, following the parliamentary elections of 28 September, “a criminal case will be opened” against her.

Alexei Lungu is alleged to have repeatedly prevented the ZdG reporter from carrying out her professional duties, making remarks such as “this isn’t work, it’s manipulation and lies” or “I need to look into the criminal case file to see what’s there regarding falsehood and the use of falsehood”, suggesting the initiation of criminal proceedings. He is also alleged to have directed derogatory remarks at her, belittling her professional standing. Despite the journalist’s repeated requests to cease the intimidation and allow her to carry out her work, he is alleged to have continued his interference, including whilst she was attempting to obtain statements from Evghenia Gutul. Mariuta Nistor had previously been the target of similar threats from Alexei Lungu on 9 May 2025, during a march organised in the centre of Chisinau.

Similarly, the case of TVR Moldova [journalist Angelina Ungureanu](#), who was likewise pushed and intimidated by the leader of the “Șansă” Party prior to the start of the court hearing. He intervened aggressively, preventing her from continuing her conversation with Evghenia Guțul. According to the journalist, she was pushed several times and intimidated, while her requests to be allowed to carry out her professional duties were ignored.

These incidents outline a concerning pattern of pressure and intimidation targeting journalists in the exercise of their professional duties.

2 July 2025

Municipal councillor Ludmila Polodiuc, Vice-Chair of the MAN faction, [physically and verbally](#) assaulted journalist Nadejda Roșcovanu, a photojournalist with Jurnal.md, inside the premises of the Chișinău City Hall. The journalist was present to document the process of voting on the municipal budget.

Following an exchange of remarks with Eugenia Ceban, councillor Polodiuc allegedly intervened, grabbed the journalist by the arms, and pushed her towards the stairs, requesting that she identify herself. During the altercation, while the journalist was attempting to defend herself and disengage, the councillor allegedly accused her of causing an injury to her finger. Subsequently, several MAN councillors reportedly surrounded the journalist and reproached her regarding her professional activity.

The journalist called the emergency service (112) and filed a complaint with the police, while the editorial team of Jurnal.md formally requested video footage from the City Hall premises in order to fully document and clarify the incident.

3 July 2025

In the context of the court hearings in the criminal case against the Bashkan of ATU Gagauzia, Evghenia Gutul, TV8 journalist Andrei Captarencu [became the target](#) of an assault whilst covering the event. According to public information, he was struck on the head with a flag by a protester present at the rally in support of Evghenia Gutul. The incident fits into the pattern of pressure on the press in politically charged public spaces, where journalists are targeted simply for carrying out their professional duties.

The assault was reported as part of a recent escalation of intimidation and attacks on reporters covering protests, court hearings or attempting to obtain reactions from political figures. During the same period, several editorial boards reported cases of harassment, abusive accosting and violence, which contributes to reinforcing a perception of impunity for such acts.

In response, the Centre for Independent Journalism, together with the co-signatory organisations, [has publicly condemned](#) the attacks and called on the authorities to prioritise the protection of journalists: investigating and punishing the perpetrators, strengthening the legal framework and effectively enforcing existing safeguards (including the criminal provision on the intentional obstruction of media activities / intimidation of journalists), as well as prompt police intervention when the physical or moral integrity of journalists is endangered.

29 July 2025

During a [public meeting](#), Ziarul de Garda journalist Natalia Zaharescu asked Victoria Furtuna about a possible affiliation with Ilan Șor. Instead of answering the question directly, Furtuna launched a verbal attack on the publication, accusing it of representing “PAS” and of being funded by “dirty money” from the USAID, Soros Foundation, and other foreign sources. This response shifted the discussion away from the subject of the question towards the alleged lack of legitimacy of the media outlet, using political labels and insinuations regarding its funding.

The incident fits into a broader pattern of attacks on the independent press, in which journalists are discredited when they ask uncomfortable questions about political or financial connections.

30 July 2025

Alexei Petrovici, President of the National Coordination Committee “Pobeda” (*Victory*), following the publication of an investigative report by RISE Moldova indicating that he allegedly receives funding from “Pravfond”, in which he was one of the main subjects, [reacted publicly with an insulting message](#) targeting the journalists of the RISE editorial team, using derogatory labels such as “rats” and “useless idiots”. The attack is presented as an attempt to discredit the newsroom and the authors of the investigation, in the context of a sensitive topic related to funding and external influence.

Journalist Marcela Zămosteanu [publicly denounced the attack](#) and placed it in a broader context, stating that Petrovici later acknowledged having received funds (although he had previously referred to them as “donations from private individuals”) and noting that he had also sent her audio messages complaining that the accounts of associated organizations had been blocked.

5 August 2025

In front of the Chișinău Court, during a demonstration organized in support of the Bashkan of the Autonomous Territorial Unit (ATU) of Gagauzia, Evghenia Guțul (on the day of the delivery of the judgment in the case concerning the illegal financing of the former “Șor” party), at least three journalists were [harassed and assaulted by some of the participants](#). Reporters from the media project *Fără Filtre* (*Filters Off*), Constantin Niculae and Veronica Gherbovețchi, were subjected to intimidation and physical aggression by one of the participants, while TV8 journalist Viorica Tătaru was spat on by another “protester”. The incident forms part of a broader pattern of repeated pressure on the media in the context of protests associated with the network of Ilan Șor and supporters of Evghenia Guțul, where journalists are targeted simply for exercising their profession in the public space.

Non-governmental media organizations have [publicly condemned](#) these acts and called on law enforcement agencies to initiate legal proceedings to hold the aggressors to account. The signatories emphasised that such actions constitute a serious violation of physical integrity, personal safety and the special rights guaranteed to journalists, whilst also calling for effective measures to stop and counteract the repeated abuses directed against the press during these rallies.

14 August 2025

During the protest in Vulcanesti, organised against the backdrop of rising prices, Zahar Pavlioglo, a cameraman for the nokta.md portal, was [physically assaulted](#) after the rally had ended, whilst carrying out his professional duties. As it was reported, the journalist followed some of the protest organisers (Mihail Vlah and Fiodor Dobrov), who were walking behind the activist Ivan Besarab. Fiodor Dobrov allegedly asked him to stop filming (“Put the camera down, don’t follow us”), and the journalist replied that he was a representative of the press and had the right to film. Subsequently, he was reportedly approached by the sons of the former deputy of the People’s Assembly of Gagauzia, Dmitrii Topala, who allegedly threatened him, and one of them allegedly pulled his hair, despite the fact that the journalist reiterated that he was “merely doing his job”.

The incident was publicly condemned by Luciano Scambiato Licciardi, representative of the Political, Press and Information Section of the EU Delegation to the Republic of Moldova, who described the case as “harassment and an attack” and emphasised that press freedom and access to information are fundamental rights in a democratic society, calling on the authorities to investigate and ensure safe working conditions for journalists. Meanwhile, the police reported that Vulcanesti Police Inspectorate had recorded the incident and initiated an investigation.

16 August 2025

During the protest held in front of the Railway Station, the AGORA team was subjected [to verbal abuse](#) by participants. The journalist was addressed with insults and vulgar expressions, and one protester shouted: “You should be killed.”

Throughout the protest, the atmosphere was hostile towards the press: some participants struck the team’s microphone, refused to engage in dialogue and accused the journalists of being “instigators”, “grant-eaters” or manipulators. According to the post, the protest was announced by the fugitive oligarch Ilan Șor and was declared unauthorised and illegal by the authorities.

26 September 2025

Prior to the parliamentary elections held on 28 September 2025, socialist candidate Nicolae Pascaru [sent a prior notice](#) to the editorial team of RISE Moldova, accompanied by threats of legal action. He claimed that a [journalistic investigation](#) published by RISE, concerning a construction in the village of Trebujeni—initially presented as a youth centre and subsequently registered as his personal property—had affected his electoral prospects. He also announced his intention to seek compensation for alleged “material damage”, including a potential reduction in the number of parliamentary mandates and in the financial allocations from the State budget granted to his party.

RISE Moldova reported this attempt at intimidation associated with SLAPP actions, aimed at exerting pressure on journalists and intimidating and discouraging the investigation of matters of public interest.

27 October 2025

The mayor of Pepeni village, Sângerei district, Oleg Cernei, [intimidated](#) journalist Carolina Buimestru, a contributor to the Anticoruptie.md portal, in the context of her request for a response to allegations made by the head of the local House of Culture regarding certain orders signed by the mayor concerning employment relations. The mayor ignored the journalist’s requests, refused direct dialogue, asked the journalists to leave his office, and used offensive language in order to obstruct the documentation of the subject.

Subsequently, the mayor contacted the journalist by telephone, addressing her with insults and defamatory accusations, while the verbal attacks continued during a local public meeting, thereby reinforcing a pattern of intimidation targeting the exercise of journalistic activity.

The CIJ and other media organisations publicly [condemned](#) the Mayor’s Oleg Cernei behaviour, describing it as abusive and hostile towards the press, emphasising that he had sought to intimidate the journalist and discourage from reporting on a matter of public interest. The NGOs called on the mayor to behave in a civilised manner and to issue a public apology to the journalist, describing the incident as an attempt to undermine press freedom.

31 October 2025

Journalist Mariana Rata, presenter of the broadcast Cutia Neagra and reporter for TV8, received death threats following the broadcast in which she interviewed the leader of the *Partidul Nostru (Our Party)*, Renato Usatii, at the end of October 2025. The journalist announced that she would report the threats to the police for investigation and published the content of the messages on social media to draw attention to the seriousness of the situation.

The Centre for Independent Journalism (CIJ) and other media organisations strongly [condemned](#) the intimidation and called on law

enforcement agencies to punish the perpetrator of the threats and insults and to protect press freedom. The Council of Europe, through the Platform for the Protection of Journalism, issued an [alert](#) regarding press freedom in the Republic of Moldova, calling for a prompt investigation into the case and protection for journalists.

Note: The death threats addressed to the journalist constitute a serious act of intimidation and online harassment, made by a supporter of a political figure, in the context of dissatisfaction with critical questions asked during a television broadcast. It is an attack on press freedom, as it seeks to discourage the exercise of the role of holding those in power accountable and to punish critical journalism through pressure, fear and incitement to violence.

2 January 2026

The nephew of the former Speaker of the People's Assembly of Gagauzia, Dmitri Konstantinov, who has been sentenced to 12 years of imprisonment and is evading justice, published an online post targeting journalist Mihail Sîrkeli, editor-in-chief of the publication Nokta, as well as the Nokta editorial team and other public figures. He disseminated messages containing insulting and defamatory content directed at Mihail Sîrkeli and the Nokta newsroom, in the context of critical reporting on his case. The Nokta editorial team [made the situation public](#), highlighting the offensive nature of the statements and the context in which they were made.

Note: The post constitutes an act of online harassment and public defamation, originating from an individual closely associated with a convicted political actor, in the context of dissatisfaction with critical journalistic reporting. It represents an attack on press freedom, as it aims to intimidate and delegitimize a newsroom through insults and public pressure, with the purpose of discouraging investigations and criticism concerning influential figures.

16 January 2026

The Russian state authority Roskomnadzor (Federal Service for Supervision of Communications, Information Technology and Mass Media) ordered the editorial team of Ziarul de Gardă (ZdG) to remove from its website the Russian-language version of an article concerning Vladimir Putin's palace in illegally annexed Crimea. The authority invoked an alleged "violation of the procedure for the dissemination of information", warning that, in case of non-compliance, internet operators could be required to restrict access to the indicated resource within 24 hours.

The ZdG editorial team stated that no evidence had been provided regarding the alleged falsity of the information and refused to comply with the order, considering that the Russian authority lacks legal ju-

risdiction in the Republic of Moldova. ZdG [announced](#) that the article remains published and that it will continue to report on Russia's war of occupation and other matters of public interest, calling on the Moldovan authorities to take measures to protect the online environment and freedom of the press against external interference.

Note: This order constitutes an act of censorship and transnational institutional pressure, originating from a media regulatory authority of a foreign state, in the context of critical reporting on political leaders and international actions. It represents an attack on freedom of the press, as it seeks to restrict access to information of public interest and to exercise control over independent journalistic content based on external regulations, thereby undermining the right to information and editorial independence.

CATEGORY 5.**Suppression of freedom of expression and activity of HRDs in the Transnistrian region**

The documented cases highlight a systemic trend of restricting freedom of expression and repressing the activities of journalists and HRDs in the Transnistrian region, through the use of administrative, legislative, and repressive mechanisms by de facto structures. Arbitrary refusals of access and accreditation for journalists, the criminalisation of unauthorized journalistic activity, as well as initiatives to impose sanctions under the pretext of combating “false information”, contribute to a climate of control and intimidation of the press. At the same time, the unlawful detention and conviction of HRDs on fabricated charges indicate the use of criminal repression as a tool to silence critical voices. These practices seriously undermine fundamental rights and reinforce a regime of impunity in the region, in the absence of effective mechanisms for the protection of freedom of expression.

5 March 2025

The editor-in-chief of the MOCT media project, Evghenii Ceban, [was not allowed to enter](#) the Transnistrian region, having been informed by a checkpoint official that access is permitted only on the basis of accreditation. The journalist stated that he was not travelling for professional purposes, but the de facto authorities refused even to allow him accompanied access to clarify the situation.

This refusal comes against the backdrop of the Transnistrian administration having suspended, since spring 2022, the acceptance of accreditation applications for journalists, following the introduction of the so-called “Terrorist Threat Code”. In this context, the accreditation application submitted by the MOCT project was rejected.

Subsequently, on 6 May, the de facto administration [refused](#) to grant accreditation to members of the MOCT team to cover public events in the region, even though these had been officially promoted as open to the public. The refusal was justified by general references to internal regulations, which allow accreditation to be denied without providing clear explanations.

These actions fit into a broader context of measures promoted by the Transnistrian administration, whereby carrying out journalistic activities without accreditation is [treated as an administrative offence](#), both for journalists from outside the region and for local ones.

31 March 2025

A so-called draft law [has been published](#) on the website of the self-proclaimed “Supreme Soviet of the Pridnestrovian Moldavian Republic” in Tiraspol, which provides for the fining of ‘foreign’ journalists, including those from the right bank of the Dniester, who operate in the region without accreditation from the separatist authorities. Penalties of up to approximately 160 MDL for citizens and between approximately 300 and 800 MDL for persons in positions of responsibility have been provided for, to be enforced by “militia” and “press control bodies”,

under the pretext of combating “false information” and “negative materials” about the realities in the region.

The initiative is part of a series of repressive measures against the media, following several illegal detentions of journalists and their declaring as “undesirable”. At the same time, the so-called “Code of Administrative Offences” allows for fines of up to 1,600 MDL and even pre-trial detention for alleged breaches of “access rules”.

Several media organisations [have publicly condemned](#) the initiative and called on the constitutional authorities of the Republic of Moldova to ensure its withdrawal and to prevent any further abuses against the press. At the same time, they have urged international partners – including the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, the European Union Delegation to the Republic of Moldova and the embassies of European Union member states – to raise the issue in bilateral dialogues and to condition their support by the respect for fundamental rights.

The Promo-LEX Association [has also issued](#) a public appeal condemning the initiative and calling for an immediate end to abusive measures against journalists in the Transnistrian region.

15 September 2025

According to information provided by Promo-LEX and reported by [De-schide.md](#), journalist and human rights defender Vadim Pogorletchii has been unlawfully detained in the Transnistrian region since 25 August 2022 and is reported to have been subjected, during his detention, to inhuman and degrading conditions, including total isolation, treatment equivalent to torture and deprivation of medical care. He was reportedly recently sentenced to 16 years of imprisonment by the de facto authorities from Tiraspol, on the basis of charges described as fabricated, such as ‘high treason’ and ‘denying the positive role of Russian peacekeeping forces’. According to the same source, the case has been kept secret, and his detention is said to be a direct reprisal for his public criticism of the regime and for reporting on conditions in prisons on the left bank of the Dniester.

Promo-LEX has issued an appeal to the UN Special Rapporteurs calling for immediate international intervention: the unconditional release of Pogorletchii, access to an independent doctor, and the establishment of an international mechanism to monitor detention in the region. The organisation views the case as a pattern of persecution of critical voices and also points out that his release was reportedly set as a condition by the constitutional authorities in Chisinau in the context of gas transit to the region (February 2025), a condition which, according to Promo-LEX, has not been met.

10 September 2025

Journalists from the Glossa media portal [were detained](#) in Tiraspol by the officers of the so-called 'MGB' (*Ministry of State Security*). The team was taken to the 'ministry', where they were interrogated for approximately two hours, and their equipment was confiscated. Subsequently, all footage filmed in Tiraspol was deleted without the journalists' consent. The reason given for the detention was working without "accreditation", and, according to public reports, they were told that "next time" they could face "deportation".

CATEGORY 6.

Utilizarea structurilor paralele și delegitimarea societății civile

A recurring practice to undermine the credibility of the civil society sector in the Republic of Moldova involves the creation and use of organisations that present themselves as civic, educational or social initiatives, but which in reality function as instruments of political influence or controlled mobilisation. Under the guise of legitimate civic activities, these structures can be used to shape and direct collective behaviour, orchestrate involvement in public actions, or facilitate non-transparent participation in sensitive democratic processes. Such entities distort the true meaning of civic activity, acting as satellite structures of political actors or external interests and contributing to the discrediting of the independent civil society.

14 May 2025

In 2025, the organization “Evrazia”—a structure launched in 2024 by fugitive oligarch Ilan Șor and presented as an NGO for cooperation with the Russian Federation—continued its activities, raising serious concerns regarding its impact on the security and democratic stability of the Republic of Moldova.

The authorities reported several cases of teaching staff who participated in training sessions held in the Russian Federation under the auspices of “Evrazia”, most of them originating from the Gagauzia region, where, in parallel, an intensification of school events with a patriotic character was observed. The Minister of Education, Dan Perciun, [warned](#) that such trainings aim to promote Kremlin narratives and to transform certain teachers into agents of influence within the educational environment, specifying that, should such practices be repeated, severe sanctions would be applied, including the withdrawal of teaching and managerial qualifications.

At the same time, [journalistic investigations](#) have revealed that several young individuals who had previously participated in study visits to Russia through “Evrazia” were subsequently involved in protest actions in support of the Bashkan of Gagauzia, Evghenia Guțul, and other politicians associated with Ilan Șor. These individuals reportedly benefited from training that included techniques for confronting law enforcement, the use of methods to provoke disorder during demonstrations, and the use of weapons to inflict non-lethal harm.

The Ombudsman for Children’s Rights also [warned](#) about the risks associated with the involvement of children and teaching staff in programmes organized by “Evrazia”, referring, inter alia, to a previous case of minors who participated in a summer camp in the Russian Federation through this organization. The Ombudsman highlighted concerns regarding the potential use of such initiatives for propaganda purposes and for influencing the perceptions of young people.

Note: The creation and use of structures presented as NGOs to promote opaque political agendas poses major risks to the educational environment, the protection of human rights and the proper functioning of democratic processes. Such practices erode public trust in genuine civil society organisations, fuel the general stigmatisation of the voluntary sector and may have negative consequences for democracy and social stability.

26 September 2025

In the context of the parliamentary elections in September 2025, the Union of Lawyers of Moldova (ULM) [became](#), for the first time, one of the organisations with the highest number of accredited observers, requesting nearly 1,200 accreditations – a number comparable to that of Promo-LEX. The involvement of the ULM as a major player in election monitoring has sparked public debate, particularly regarding the organisation’s leadership, funding sources and institutional capacity.

In this regard, political connections within the leadership of the ULM have been highlighted. The president of the organisation, [Maxim Leb- edinschi](#), is a former member of the PSRM and a former defence lawyer for ex-president Igor Dodon, whilst members of his family have held or currently hold political and administrative positions promoted by the same party. These connections have fuelled perceptions of potential partisanship in the electoral context.

At the same time, journalistic investigations have highlighted the absence of financial activity reported by the ULM between 2020 and 2023, and the fact that the observation mission is funded by 15 local businesses, some of them having public connections with election candidates or experiencing significant financial losses. The absence of public data on the amount of donations and the total budget of the mission has raised questions regarding financial transparency, especially since private funding of the civil society is rare case in the Republic of Moldova.

Note: Although the involvement of new organisations in election monitoring is not, in itself, incompatible with democratic standards, the ULM case highlights risks to the credibility of the election observation process. At the same time, the case contributes to a climate of confusion and fuels suspicions regarding the role of non-governmental organisations and their possible political affiliations or potential affiliations – a narrative already heavily exploited in the public sphere to delegitimise civil society and undermine public trust in independent democratic monitoring mechanisms.

CATEGORY 7.

Coordinated disinformation campaigns, harassment, and attacks in the online information space

The documented cases point to the existence of coordinated disinformation and harassment campaigns in the online information space, systematically targeting the independent media, journalists and civic activists. These actions involve the use of fake accounts, bot networks and, in some cases, artificial intelligence technologies to fabricate manipulative content, disseminate false or defamatory information, and artificially amplify certain political narratives. The attacks are characterised by anonymity, recurrence and coordination, and are intensified in sensitive contexts such as election campaigns, public debates on governance or human rights-related events. The persistence of these practices, coupled with limited or ineffective responses from platforms and authorities, contributes to creating a climate of intimidation, eroding public trust in the media, and undermining the role of the press as a key actor in a democratic society.

18 February 2025

Investigative journalist Mariana Rata [has been subjected](#) to repeated, coordinated attacks in the online space, including the use of artificial intelligence technologies and disinformation campaigns regarding the funding of TV8 media outlet.

According to her, a sponsored video is circulating on Facebook, shared by a page managed from Bangladesh, in which her image and voice are reproduced using AI to promote a financial scam. The journalist stated that reports of this content did not lead to its removal, with the platform indicating that there were no violations of its policies.

At the same time, Mariana Rata drew attention to [the circulation of information](#) presented as 'leaks' regarding grants obtained by TV8 from the United States, which are presented in a manipulative manner. She emphasised that funding the media through grants is a legal and transparent practice, and that TV8 has never concealed its sources of funding, which are public and audited.

The journalist highlighted a phenomenon that has been known for several years, namely the persistent attacks launched by anonymous accounts and Telegram channels with no legal identity, which act in a coordinated manner and do not accept legal responsibility for the statements they make, the aim of these actions being to discredit the independent press and intimidate journalists.

13 May 2025

Several media institutions in the Republic of Moldova reported, during the same period, coordinated online manipulation campaigns attributed to networks affiliated with fugitive oligarch Ilan Șor.

The Stiri.md platform [announced](#) that it had been the target of a wave of attacks on Facebook and Telegram, where fake accounts spread anti-European messages and promoted the idea that the Bashkan of Gagauzia, Evghenia Gutul, was a victim of the authorities in Chișinău.

According to the editorial board, the involved profiles used fictitious identities, reacted automatically to every article and repeated the same messages to create the impression of an artificial consensus. The reporting measures proved ineffective, as the accounts could be quickly recreated.

A similar phenomenon [was also reported](#) by BASTv, where repetitive comments appeared under almost every post, being unrelated to the subject matter, criticising the authorities or promoting pro-Russian rhetoric associated with Ilan Șor and accompanied by attacks on the independent press.

Furthermore, [CPI reported](#) a massive wave of bot-generated comments, published shortly after articles appeared, regardless of the topic. The editorial board noted that the messages had become more varied and tailored to the context of the posts, imitating the interventions of real users and making moderation more difficult as the parliamentary elections approached.

For its part, NewsMaker [reported](#) similar coordinated comments originating from fake accounts, which generally criticised the government, promoted Ilan Șor's team or attacked the independent media. The profiles in question were, for the most part, fictitious accounts, with no real photos or genuine activity.

Note: These cases reveal a clear pattern of coordinated pressure on the independent press, through the use of fake accounts and systematic dissemination of political narratives aimed at eroding public trust in the media and influencing public debate, particularly in sensitive electoral contexts.

3 September 2025

Journalist Nicolae Chicu [announced](#) that he had been the target of a cyberattack that resulted in the compromising and subsequent deletion of his YouTube channel (approx. 68,000–70,000 subscribers). According to his public statements, the attackers hacked his email account, altered his password recovery details and took control of the channel, broadcasting a live stream featuring crypto scams (reporting approximately 30,000 users online). The journalist suggested that this tactic was intended to trigger a wave of reports for “financial scams”, which would lead to the automatic removal of the channel.

Chicu described the incident as an attempt to silence him and placed it in the context of hybrid warfare and the approaching parliamentary elections on 28 September 2025, emphasising that his channel generated hundreds of thousands of views monthly and hosted pro-Western and anti-disinformation content. He later reported that, despite attempts to recover it, the channel had been deleted.

20 October 2025

Journalist Elena Celac, from Radio Moldova Comrat, [became](#) the victim of an online harassment campaign, consisting of insults, offensive labelling, threats and ungrounded accusations, launched by several Facebook profiles. The attacks followed the broadcast of the programme „În centrul atenției” (*In the Spotlight*), during which the guest – Nicolai Dudoglo, a member of the People’s Assembly of Gagauzia – left the studio, refusing to provide evidence for the claims and accusations made on air, including those regarding alleged illegal acts by certain politicians.

The Centre for Independent Journalism and media organisations [condemned](#) these practices, emphasising that the harassment, threatening and defamation of journalists, including online, are punishable by law, and that the absence of prompt responses from the authorities fosters a climate of impunity and the false perception that the online space lies outside the legal framework.

Mihail Sirkeli also [spoke out](#) in defence of journalist Elena Celac, describing the attacks against her as an online “lynching” and a serious sign of intolerance towards the independent media. He further emphasised that the journalist had been targeted solely for carrying out her professional duties by asking a politician legitimate questions.

The signatory organisations called on the law enforcement agencies of the Republic of Moldova to take a stand on the matter on their own initiative and to apply the necessary legal procedures to hold the perpetrators of the threats, insults and false accusations to account, stressing that tolerating such attacks undermines freedom of the press and the public’s right to information.

19 January 2026

Journalist Mariana Rata, a presenter at TV8, has been the target of a [series of online attacks](#) and orchestrated smear campaigns, including during live broadcasts and in comments posted on social media platforms. Aggressive messages, insults, and derogatory remarks have been posted by users or online groups, while those responsible have not always been publicly identified. The attacks included the dissemination of false information, defamatory statements and acts of online harassment directed against the journalist and her professional reputation.

Several non-governmental media organizations, coordinated by the Centre for Independent Journalism, [have strongly condemned](#) these smear and harassment campaigns and have called on law enforcement agencies to punish the perpetrators of slander and abuse, as well as to ensure the protection of freedom of expression and the safety of journalists.

Note: These actions constitute an online smear and intimidation campaign, originating in the digital sphere and directed against a journalist for her critical professional work, with the aim of discouraging and publicly discrediting her. They constitute an attack on press freedom, as they create a climate of hostility and pressure on the journalist and media organisations operating in the public interest, undermining society's right to information and the safety of media professionals.

CATEGORY 8.

Stigmatisation of HRDs and identity-based attacks

This category highlights the use of stigmatising and discriminatory public discourse both to delegitimise the defence of vulnerable groups' rights and to attack the personal identity of the targeted activist. Offensive and stereotypical messages containing homophobic content turn their identity into a tool for public discrediting and intimidation. When such messages come from authorities, politicians or public figures, their impact is amplified, contributing to the normalisation of intolerance and the legitimisation of hostility in the public sphere. These practices affect the civic space and undermine democratic debate based on respect, equality and non-discrimination.

21 January 2025

The President of the Association of Independent Political Scientists in the Transnistrian region, Andrey Safonov, [published](#) several comments on Facebook directly targeting the Director of the organisation Genderdoc-M, Angelica Frolov. In these posts, the activist is described as a promoter of “мерзость” (“filth”), and the values she upholds are described as being “отвратительные здоровому большинству на планете” (“repulsive to the healthy majority of the planet”). At the same time, the author states that such ideas “не допустят у нас этого” (“will not be allowed here”) and that they should be “послать подальше” (“sent as far away as possible”).

In another comment, he resorts to directly offensive and stigmatising language, addressing the person with expressions such as: “не квакай под руку!” (“stop quacking next to me!”), “ты меня извращенцами не пугай” (“don't scare me with your perverts”) and “давай лучше становись нормальным хлопцем” (“you'd better become a normal lad”). These phrases contain insults, discriminatory stereotypes and suggestions to ‘normalise’ the identity of the person concerned.

8 March 2025

On the occasion of International Women's Day, the 11th edition of the Feminist March [was held](#) in the centre of Chisinau. The event was held with the aim of promoting gender equality and raising public awareness of discrimination and violence against women, with the slogan for this year's edition being “Sex education is vital, not optional”.

Following media and public coverage of the event, numerous hostile, misogynistic and derogatory comments were posted on social media targeting the participants and the messages promoted during the march. These included statements such as: “they're infiltrating us with foreign ideas again”, “what are men doing among feminists?”, “it's like the LGBT movement, laundering USAID money”, “they need sex education so they know not to breed such scum” or “make them pull a plough and get them ploughing until their sex drive passes”, as well as other offensive or violence-inciting expressions. Such messages

constitute examples of stigmatising and misogynistic discourse in the online space, directed against supporters of women's rights and feminist activism.

In response, the National Coalition Viața fără Violență (Life Without Violence) [published](#) an informative post explaining the concepts of misogyny and internalised misogyny, as well as how these attitudes manifest in the public space. It also provided information and recommendations for combating discriminatory behaviour and promoting a public discourse based on respect and equality. The 12th edition of the Feminist March is set [to take place](#) on 8 March 2026, under the slogan "A state in need is a state indeed. Safety for women, justice in the courts".

29 May 2025

The Director of the Genderdoc-M organization, Angelica Frolov, [became the target](#) of a coordinated wave of hostile comments originating from fake accounts on social media. The attack messages also continued in the comments section of the Facebook page of News-Maker, where dozens of suspicious profiles posted defamatory messages targeting the activist. Although the editorial team attempted to remove comments originating from bot accounts, the phenomenon persisted.

A significant proportion of the messages referred to Gagauzia, suggesting that Frolov "is once again interfering in Gagauz affairs" or that she "is attacking schools in Gagauzia", formulations aimed at amplifying tensions and fuelling hostile narratives.

The attacks took place on the eve of Moldova Pride festival (9–15 June 2025), which included [the organisation of the Pride march in Chisinau](#) at the end of the event.

LIST OF SIGNATORY ORGANIZATIONS

(Listed in alphabetical order)

AO Amnesty International Moldova

AO Media Alternativa (TV8)

AO Media Birlii – Uniunea Media (Laf.md)

AO Primăria Mea

AO Piligrim Demo

Asociația pentru Democrație Participativă ADEPT

Asociația Promo-LEX

Centrul CONTACT

Centrul de Informații GENDERDOC-M

Centrul de Politici și Reforme

Centrul de Resurse Juridice din Moldova

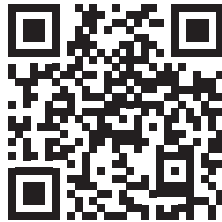
Centrul MEMORIA

Centrul pentru Jurnalism Independent

Fundația Soros Moldova

Ziarul de Gardă

The document remains open for signing.



You can support the
research and advocacy
activities of the LRCM
through an [online donation](#).

LEGAL RESOURCES CENTRE FROM MOLDOVA

📍 str. A. Șciusev 33,
MD-2001, Chișinău,
Republica Moldova

☎ +373 22 84 36 01
+373 22 84 36 02

✉ contact@crjm.org
🌐 www.crjm.org

📘 crjm.org
📺 crjmoldiva