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Moldova - Researched and compiled by the Refugee Documentation Centre of Ireland on 10 March 2010

Treatment of those who are opposed to the communist regime.

A September 2009 report from *BBC News*outlines the change of government in Moldova from Communism to a pro western political alliance, stating:

> "A new pro-Western government has taken office in Moldova after winning the approval of parliament.
>
> Vlad Filat becomes prime minister of the country, which has been paralysed since an election in April sparked street riots amid claims of rigging.
>
> Opposition parties ousted the ruling Communists in a re-run in July.
>
> But a significant obstacle to progress remains the election of a new president, which requires a three-fifths majority of parliament.
>
> The pro-Western coalition only holds 53 of the 101 seats in parliament, so would not be able to elect its candidate without the support of some Communists." (BBC News (25 September 2009) *Moldova gets new pro-Western PM*)

A report from the *Council of Europe* regarding political violence in 2009 states:

> "In the course of April 2009, the CPT received reports from various sources according to which, following the parliamentary elections of 5 April 2009, hundreds of persons had been apprehended by the police after violent incidents occurred during public protests in front of the Presidency, Parliament and Government buildings in Chisinau. Those reports referred to severe physical ill-treatment at the time of apprehension, during transportation and/or during subsequent police custody. The Committee also received information indicating that some persons had died as a result of police action on 7-8 April 2009." (Council of Europe - European Committee for the Prevention of Torture and Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (14 December 2009) *Report to the Moldovan Government on the visit to Moldova carried out by the European Committee for the Prevention of Torture and Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (CPT) from 27 to 31 July 2009 [CPT/Inf (2009) 37]"*)

A report from the *UN Human Rights Committee* states:

> "The Committee expresses its concern at credible reports of grave human rights violations committed against protesters following post-election demonstrations in April 2009. In this regard, the Committee takes note of the delegation's statement that law enforcement officers "acted outside of their powers". It is particularly concerned at reports of arbitrary arrests, violent

crowd control tactics, including beatings, and the torture and ill-treatment of persons detained in connection with the post-election demonstrations." (arts. 2, 6, 7, 9 and 21)" (UN Human Rights Committee (4 November 2009) *"Consideration of Reports submitted by State Parties under Article 40 of the Covenant; Concluding observations of the Human Rights Committee [CCPR/C/MDA/CO/2]"*)

An April 2009 *Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty* news report states:

"Moldovan President Vladimir Voronin urged legal authorities to proclaim an amnesty for people detained while taking part in anti-communist demonstrations, except for criminals and repeat offenders.

"I call on the competent bodies to carry out a general amnesty and call for an end to all forms of prosecution against participants in street protests," Voronin said in comments broadcast before a televised address to the nation. "Representatives of the criminal world and repeat offenders must remain in prison." (Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty (15 April 2009) *Moldovan president calls for amnesty for protesters*)

An April 2009 *Times Online* news report states:

"Moldova is Europe's only communist state and one of its poorest, with an average monthly salary of only $350. Thousands of its people seek work abroad to support their families, sending back $1.6 billion in remittances last year - about the same amount as the state budget.

International observers had judged the election to be fair but the Mayor of Chisinau, Dorin Chirtoaca, alleged that turnout had been inflated to cover up ballot fraud and multiple voting. Mr Chirtoaca is also deputy leader of the opposition Liberal Party.

Moldova's three main opposition parties demanded fresh elections to defuse tensions as protesters burnt communist flags and chanted "We want to join Europe" and "We are Romanians". Many were waving Romanian and European Union flags.

Two-thirds of Moldova's 3.8 million people are descended from Romanians and retain strong ties with their neighbour in the EU. The former Bessarabia was part of Romania until Josef Stalin annexed it for the Soviet Union under the Molotov-Ribbentrop pact with Hitler's Germany in World War Two.

The EU's foreign policy chief Javier Solana called on all sides to "refrain from violence and provocation" amid fears of instability on the union's eastern border. Moldova is scheduled to join the EU's new Eastern Partnership aid programme next month with five other former Soviet republics.

Russia's deputy foreign minister, Grigory Karasin, expressed concern at the violence, which he said had been provoked. He noted that observers from the Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe and from former Soviet republics in the Commonwealth of Independent States had declared the election result to be fair.

> The protest began yesterday with demonstrations organised by a protest group called I Am An Anti-Communist. Organisers said that they did not believe one in two Moldovans had voted for the Communists.
>
> "The protests are justified because people did not vote for the Communists in such large numbers," Mr Chirtoaca told local television. "The elections were fraudulent, there was multiple voting...These are people who don't know what democracy is." (Times Online (7 April 2009) *Violent anti-communist protests after election in Moldova*)

An April 2009 *The Guardian* news article states:

> “Protesters in Moldova stormed the country's parliament today, smashing windows and hurling tables and chairs out onto the street, in a violent protest against Sunday's elections which saw the ruling communists returned to power.
>
> Anti-communist demonstrators poured into the building and heaped whatever they found onto the street. They set fire to paper, computers, and furniture. A small group also broke into the president's office - as police using tear gas and water canons tried to drive them back.
>
> At least 10,000 protesters gathered outside the parliament building in the capital, Chisinau. The young crowd carried EU, Moldovan and Romanian flags and shouted slogans including: "Down with communism!" "Freedom!" and "We want Europe!" Others demanded the unification of Moldova and Romania.
>
> Today's protests came two days after an election commission confirmed that the Communist party under president Vladimir Voronin had comfortably won the elections. According to official results, the party won about 49.9 per cent. Opposition leaders in Moldova have dismissed the poll as fraudulent and are demanding a new vote.
>
> "The protests are justified because people did not vote for the communists in such large numbers," Chisinau's mayor Dorin Chirtoaca told Realitatea TV. He added: "The elections were fraudulent, there was multiple voting ... These are people who don't know what democracy is."
>
> "The election was controlled by the communists, they bought everyone off," Alexei, a student, told Reuters. "We will have no future under the communists because they just think of themselves." At least 30 people were hurt in today's clashes, which also saw students hijack fire engines and drive them away.” (The Guardian (7 April 2009) *Anti-communist protestors storm Moldova parliament after elections*)

An April 2009 *Committee to Protect Journalists* report adds:

> “The Committee to Protect Journalists called on Moldovan authorities today to allow Romanian journalists to enter Moldova and report on anti-communist rallies that have swept Moldova's capital, Chisinau, since Monday. Approximately 10,000 protesters took to the streets on Tuesday to protest Sunday's parliamentary election, which was won by President Vladimir Voronin's Communist Party.

> At least 19 Romanian journalists, working for both domestic and international media outlets, were turned back when trying to fly into Moldova or enter at the Romania-Moldova border crossing points of Galati-Giurgiulesti and Oancea-Cahul Tuesday night and throughout Wednesday, Stefan Candea, vice president of the Bucharest-based Romanian Centre for Investigative Journalism, told CPJ. Moldovan border guards have given conflicting explanations for refusing the journalists entry." (Committee to Protect Journalists (8 April 2009) *Border guards deny Romanian journalists entry to Moldova*)

Freedom House in its annual report on Moldova states:

> "Citizens may participate freely in nongovernmental organizations (NGOs). However, private organizations must register with the state, and some NGOs have complained of bureaucratic obstruction and police harassment. Under legislation passed in February 2008, organizers of demonstrations must give notice but no longer need permits from authorities. Nevertheless, three people were allegedly detained without cause at a March event commemorating the historical union of Bessarabia and Romania. Counterdemonstrators blocked a sexual minorities march in Chisinau in May 2008, and march organizers complained that police took no action to uphold their assembly rights. Authorities exert pressure on unions and their members, and employers are rarely punished for violating union rights." (Freedom House (16 July 2009) *Freedom in the World 2009 – Moldova*)

The *United States Department of State's* annual report on Moldova states:

> "The law provides citizens the right to change their government peacefully, and citizens exercised this right in practice in most of the country through periodic, generally free and fair elections held on the basis of universal suffrage for those over 18; however, authorities at times harassed and intimidated the political opposition." (United States Department of State (25 February 2009) *Country Report on Human Rights Practices 2008: Moldova*)

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This response was prepared after researching publicly accessible information currently available to the Refugee Documentation Centre within time constraints. This response is not and does not purport to be conclusive as to the merit of any particular claim to refugee status or asylum. Please read in full all documents referred to.

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