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Moldova: Treatment and public perception of Jews in Moldova and the availability of state protection to them

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Legislation and State Actions

According to the Euro-Asian Jewish Congress, "state anti-Semitism and the legal discrimination of Jews is not observed in Moldova" (EAJC 2004). Freedom of religion is enshrined in the Moldovan Constitution (*International Religious Freedom Report 2005* 8 Nov. 2005, Sec. 2) and the government has passed various laws to protect national minorities in the country (EAJC 2004; Stephen Roth Institute 2004).

In 2001, the government passed the Law on the Rights of Persons Belonging to National Minorities and Legal Status of Their Organizations, which prohibits any form of national discrimination (EAJC 2004; see also Stephen Roth Institute 2004). In the same year, the government guaranteed Jews Hebrew and Yiddish language education at the preschool, primary, secondary, and post-secondary level (*ibid.*; EAJC 2004).

The Moldovan government passed the Law on Combatting Extremism in 2003 (*International Religious Freedom Report 2005* 8 Nov. 2005, Sec. 2; *FSU Monitor* 17 Jan. 2003) and, in 2004, adopted the Concept of National Policy of the Republic of Moldova that outlaws discrimination based on national origin (EAJC 2004). In the same year, the state adopted the Law on Languages in the Territory of the Republic of Moldova in which the use of Yiddish and Hebrew, as well as other languages, was recognized as part of the "national-cultural needs of Jews" (*ibid.*).

Moldovan law supports the recovery of property confiscated during the Nazi and Soviet regimes (*International Religious Freedom Report 2005* 8 Nov. 2005, Sec. 2; *Country Reports 2004* 28 Feb. 2005, Sec. 2.c). However, the Jewish community has had "mixed results" in recovering lost property (*ibid.*), and prospects for further recovery remain "uncertain" (NCSJ 10 Oct. 2003).

According to the National Conference on Soviet Jewry (NCSJ), "[g]overnment relations with the Jewish community are reported to be normal" (NCSJ 10 Oct. 2003). A holocaust memorial can be found close to national government offices in the capital city of Chisinau (*ibid.*). In a suburb of the same city, construction was stopped upon the discovery of a mass grave from the

Holocaust, and a memorial was raised (ibid.). Moldova's president Veronin has openly denounced anti-Semitism in his speeches (ibid.) and, along with other Moldovan officials, has attended Jewish commemoration ceremonies (Stephen Roth Institute 2004).

In 2003, a joint initiative of the Jewish Congress of the Republic of Moldova and the Association of Jewish Organizations and Communities of the Republic of Moldova resulted in the publishing of 2,000 copies of a Holocaust history schoolbook, which received support from the country's Ministry of Education (Stephen Roth Institute 2004).

The government of Moldova provides funding to the country's Jewish schools (Stephen Roth Institute 2004; *International Religious Freedom Report 2005* 8 Nov. 2005, Sec. 2).

Anti-Semitism

Despite the absence of state and legislative anti-Semitism in Moldova, there is evidence that "anti-Jewish sentiments exist in the republic in the form of open and sometimes militant anti-Semitism" (EAJC 2004).

There have been several reports of the desecration of Jewish graveyards and vandalism of synagogues (ibid.; *FSU Monitor* 22 Apr. 2004; *Bigotry Monitor* 14 May 2004; ibid. 13 May 2005). In March 2004, a Jewish cemetery in the city of Tiraspol was desecrated: seventy tombstones were vandalized, smashed and painted with swastikas and anti-Semitic slogans (EAJC 2004; *FSU Monitor* 22 Apr. 2004). In May of the same year, vandals attempted to set a synagogue in Tiraspol on fire with Molotov cocktails (*Bigotry Monitor* 14 May 2004). A Jewish cemetery in Chisinau was vandalized in 2005 (ibid. 13 May 2005).

In 2001, a cemetery worker in the Tiraspol Jewish cemetery was attacked and had a Star of David symbol carved into his back (*FSU Monitor* 22 Apr. 2004; EAJC 2004). According to the Euro-Asian Jewish Congress, the events that took place in Tiraspol "highlight problems connected with protecting Jewish cemeteries in the country" (ibid.).

In 2003, three Neo-Nazi skinheads were found guilty of bombing a Tiraspol synagogue and vandalizing a Jewish cemetery in 2001 (*FSU Monitor* 4 June 2003). One skinhead received a six-year jail sentence, while the other two received three-year sentences for, among other actions, "inciting ethnic hatred" (ibid.).

Racism in the media in Moldova has been described as a "serious problem" (Stephen Roth Institute 2004). In 2003, the radio program *Hyde Park* received a warning for "incit[ing] ethnic hatred and violence" (*FSU Monitor* 20 June 2003) after the host of the show made anti-Semitic remarks (ibid.; Stephen Roth Institute 2004). The show was later suspended, but started up again in 2004 (ibid.). A Moldovan newspaper printed anti-Semitic articles in 2005, one of which stated that the Jews in Moldova were themselves responsible for the massacres that occurred during the Nazi occupation of the country (*FSU Monitor* 5 Aug. 2005).

In 2003, an anti-Semitic book was published in Moldova and could be found in bookshops, libraries, colleges and universities of the country (Stephen Roth

Institute 2004). This book was promoted by a member of the Christian Democratic People's Party (ibid.), the country's main opposition party (EAJC 2004). The head of this party is "one of the leading propagators of anti-Jewish ... as well as Holocaust denial ... ideas" (Stephen Roth Institute 2004).

A 2002 Tiraspol newspaper printed the results of a poll conducted by Moldova's Institute of Public Policies: thirty-two percent of Moldovans surveyed indicated they would not like to have Jews as neighbours (*FSU Monitor* 2 Dec. 2002).

This Response was prepared after researching publicly accessible information currently available to the Research Directorate within time constraints. This Response is not, and does not purport to be, conclusive as to the merit of any particular claim for refugee protection. Please find below the list of additional sources consulted in researching this Information Request.

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Additional Sources Consulted

Oral Source: The Moldova Federation of Jewish Communities did not provide information within the time constraints of this Response.

Internet sites, including: Amnesty International; Anti-Defamation League; Basa Press News Agency; Chabad Lubavitch of Kishinev and Moldova; European Country of Origin Information Network; Federation of Jewish Communities of the CIS; Forum 18; Freedomhouse; The Hebrew University of Jerusalem; Human Rights Watch; Institute for War and Peace Reporting (IWPR); Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty; United States Commission on International Religious Freedom; U.S. Committee for Refugees and Immigrants; World Jewish Congress.

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