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MOLDOVA COUNTRY REPORT

April 2004

Country Information & Policy Unit

**IMMIGRATION AND NATIONALITY DIRECTORATE
HOME OFFICE, UNITED KINGDOM**



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1. Scope of Document

1.1 This Country Report has been produced by the Country Information and Policy Unit, Immigration and Nationality Directorate, Home Office, for use by Home Office officials involved in the asylum / human rights determination process. The Report provides general background information about the issues most commonly raised in asylum / human rights claims made in the United Kingdom. It is not a detailed or comprehensive survey.

1.2 The Report is compiled from a wide range of recognised sources and does not contain any Home Office opinion or policy. All information in the Report is attributed, throughout the text, to original source material, which has been made available to those working in the asylum / human rights determination process. The Report aims to provide only a brief summary of the source material quoted. For a more detailed account, the relevant source documents should be examined directly.

1.3 The information contained in this Country Report is, by its nature, limited to information that we have been able to identify from various well-recognised sources. The contents of this Report are not exhaustive and the absence of information under any particular heading does not imply that any analysis or judgement has been exercised to exclude that information, but simply that relevant information on the subject has not been identified from the sources that have been consulted. Equally, the information included in the Reports should not be taken to imply anything beyond what is actually stated.

1.4 The great majority of the source material is readily available in the public domain. Copies of other source documents, such as those provided by government offices, may be provided upon request.

1.5 All sources have been checked for currency, and as far as can be ascertained, contain information, which remained relevant at the time this Report was issued. Some source documents have been included because they contain relevant information not available in more recent documents.

1.6 This Country Report and the accompanying source material are publicly disclosable. Where sources identified in this Report are available in electronic form the relevant link has been included. The date that the relevant link was accessed in preparing the report is also included. Paper copies of the source documents have been distributed to nominated officers within IND.

1.7 It is intended to revise this Report on a six-monthly basis while the country remains within the top 35 asylum producing countries in the United Kingdom. Information contained in Country Reports is inevitably overtaken by events that occur between the 6 monthly publications. Caseworkers are informed of such changes in country conditions by means of Country Information Bulletins.

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2. Geography

2.1 The Republic of Moldova (formerly the Moldavian Soviet Socialist Republic, a constituent Union Republic of the USSR) is situated in South-Eastern Europe. It includes only a small proportion of the historical territories of Moldova (Moldavia) most of which are in Romania, while others (southern Bessarabia and Northern Bucovina – Bukovina) are in Ukraine. The country is bordered to the north, east and south by Ukraine. To the west there is a frontier with Romania. Moldova covers an area of 33,800 square kilometres (13,050 square miles). The capital city is Chişinău (Kishinev) with a population of around 750,000. Other major cities are Tiraspol (estimated population 194,000), Bălţi (157,000) and Benderi (137,000). [1][23a]

2.2 At the census of 1989, at which time the total population was 4,335,360, 64.5% of the population were Moldovans, 13.8% Ukrainians, 13.0% Russians, 3.5% Gagauz, 2.0% Jews and 1.5% Bulgarians. The ethnic Moldovans speak a dialect of Romanian, a Romance language, which replaced Russian as the official language in 1989. Ethnic minorities continue to use their own language: only some 12% of them are fluent in Romanian, whereas most speak Russian. The Gagauz speak a Turkic language, written in a Cyrillic script, but 71% of them claim fluency in Russian; only 4.4% are fluent in Romanian.[1]

2.3 Most of the inhabitants of Moldova profess Christianity, the largest denomination being the Eastern Orthodox Church. The Gagauz, despite their Turkish origins, are adherents of Orthodox Christianity. The Russian Orthodox Church (Moscow Patriarchate) has jurisdiction in Moldova, but there are Romanian and Turkish liturgies. [1]

For further information on geography, please refer to the Europa publication, source 1.

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3. Economy

3.1 The 2003 US State Department Country Report on Human Rights Practices for Moldova notes that, "The country was transitioning from a centrally-planned to a market economy, with the 'shadow economy' representing 30 to 70 percent of economic activity. Agriculture and food processing were the most important sectors, followed by trade, transportation and communications, and manufacturing. The Government estimated that approximately 80 percent of the population lived below the officially designated subsistence minimum." [2a] (p1)

3.2 Based on a Western definition of unemployment, the World Bank calculated that between 10% and 20% of the labour force was not working at

any one time. According to the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), at the end of the 1990s between 240,000 and 250,000 individuals were unemployed. Owing to salary arrears, even those who are employed have difficulty maintaining their existence. There has been substantial emigration from the country because of these economic difficulties and it is estimated that at least 10% of the population emigrated after 1991. [1]

3.3 According to Europa - Eastern Europe, Russia and Central Asia 2004, "By 2003 there were encouraging signs that the Moldovan economy was recovering, after years of declining growth. Growth of GDP had been positive in 2000 and 2001, and reached one of its highest levels in 2002, while the rate of inflation continued to decline. Although the Moldovan Party of Communists controlled the presidency, the Government and Parliament, reforms were enacted and privatisation plans proceeded... However, the economy remained very fragile." [1] (p283)

3.4 Official figures released by the Department of Statistics and Sociological Analysis in February 2003 state that 11.4% of Moldova's workforce are working abroad. Ala Mindicanu of the opposition Social Liberal Party is quoted as saying, "These people left Moldova because the state failed them. The irony is that it is these people who send home money and now help to sustain the state." [15][13h]

3.5 According to the National Bank of Moldova, an estimated \$260m was earned by Moldovans working abroad in 2002, with Western Union handling transactions worth \$159m into Moldova. Data made available by the domestic security agency SIS in 2001 indicated that at least 600,000 work capable Moldovans were employed abroad or were seeking work outside Moldova. [15]

3.6 The IMF announced in July 2003 that it was not continuing its financial package to Moldova, due to the Moldovan Government's failure to meet a number of requirements. [15k] According to Europa - Eastern Europe, Russia and Central Asia 2004, "The IMF refused to provide any additional borrowing in 2003, which meant that Moldova would have to service its debt without external assistance... Therefore although the economic situation in 2003 was better than during the late 1990s, the country was still experiencing severe economic problems, which required immediate reform." [1] (p283)

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4. History

Independence

4.1 On 27 August 1991, following the attempted coup in the Soviet capital of Moscow, Moldova declared its independence from the USSR and the CPM was banned. Romania recognised Moldova's independence and diplomatic relations between the two countries were established. The first popular

presidential elections in Moldova took place on 8 December 1991, with Snegur, the only candidate, receiving 98.2% of the votes cast. Later that month, armed conflict broke out in the Transnistria region between the Slavic 'Dniestr Guards' and government troops. On 21 December, Moldova signed the Almaty Declaration by which was formed the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS). [1] [13a]

4.2 In July 1992, a peace agreement accorded Transnistria 'special status' within Moldova; Russian, Moldovan and Dnestrian peace-keeping forces were deployed in the region to monitor the cease-fire. [1]

4.3 In August 1993, the Moldovan Parliament failed to secure the necessary majority for ratification of the Almaty Declaration and to formalise the country's entry into the CIS. Nevertheless, President Snegur continued to sign CIS documents, including a treaty on economic union in September 1993. [1]

4.4 In July 1994, the Moldovan Parliament adopted a new Constitution, which described Moldova as a sovereign, independent, unitary and indivisible state. The official state language was described as 'Moldovan', although that was acknowledged to be identical to Romanian. The Constitution proclaimed the country's neutrality and provided for 'special autonomous status for Transnistria and Gagauzia within Moldova (the exact terms of which were to be determined at a later date). In December, the Moldovan Parliament adopted legislation on the special status of Gagauz-Eri (Gagauzia); the region was to enjoy a considerable degree of autonomy; Gagauz was to be one of three official languages; and legislative power was to be vested in a regional assembly, the Halk Toplusu, while a directly elected bashkan was to hold a quasi-presidential position. This law entered into effect in February 1995. [1]

4.5 Presidential elections were held on 17 November and 1 December 1996. Parliamentary speaker Petru Lucinschi was elected President of Moldova. Also in December 1996, Igor Smirnov was re-elected for a second term as President of the 'Dniestr' Republic with more than 70% of the vote. [1]

4.6 On 8 May 1997, the memorandum of understanding on the normalising of relations between Moldova and Transnistria was signed by President Lucinschi and Smirnov in Moscow; the memorandum committed both sides to further negotiations on the status of the region. Russia was willing to withdraw troops from its 15,000-strong Russian 14th Army based in Transnistria, and Ukraine were guarantors of the agreement. [1]

4.7 In the general election of March 1998, the Moldovan Party of Communists (MPS) won the largest number of seats (40) in the 104 seat Parliament. The Democratic Convention of Moldova (CDM), an alliance which included the Party of Revival and Accord of Moldova (PRAM) and the CDPF, gained 26 seats, whilst the pro-Lucinschi Movement for a Democratic and Prosperous Moldova (MDPM) came third with 24 seats. The Moldovan Party of Democratic Forces won 11 seats. The CDM, the MDPM and the Party of Democratic Forces agreed to form a parliamentary alliance, led by the former

president Snegur; the MPC therefore was excluded from all major parliamentary and government posts. Ion Ciubuc, a member of the CDM, led the new Government. [1]

4.8 Prime Minister Ciubuc resigned in February 1999, as, subsequently, did the Parliamentary leader, Snegur, when his candidature for presidency was rejected. Ion Sturza was confirmed as premier in the following month. However, his Government was dismissed following a vote of 'no confidence' by Parliament on 10 November and eventually replaced by a new government under Dumitru Braghis in 20 December. [1]

4.9 On 21 July 2000, Parliament overturned a veto imposed by President Lucinschi on a law that introduced parliamentary rule to Moldova, by permitting Parliament to elect the head of state. Presidential elections took place on 4 December. The MPC candidate, Vladimir Voronin, was supported by 50 of the 101 parliamentary deputies, and his opponent, the Chairman of the Constitutional Court, Pavel Barbat, received 35 votes. Neither of the candidates reached the level of support required to be elected (three-fifths of the votes). A further round of voting for the presidency, between the same two candidates, proved inconclusive after a number of centre-right deputies boycotted the parliamentary session. After consulting the Constitutional Court, Parliament was dissolved on 31 December and a parliamentary election set for 25 February 2001. [1]

4.10 Parliamentary elections were held in Transnistria on 10 December 2000. Of the 43 seats, independent candidates won 25; the Yedinstvo (Unity) movement emerged as the largest single party, with nine seats, the pro-Government Obnovlniye (Renovation) bloc secured seven seats and the Power to the People! Bloc secured one. The election was cancelled in one constituency, owing to revelations of electoral malpractice on the part of both candidates. [1]

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Parliamentary Elections of February 2001

4.11 In the parliamentary elections, held on 25 February 2001, the MPC won 71 of 101 seats, the centrists Braghis Alliance won 19 seats, and the Christian Democratic People's Party (CDPP – as the CDPF was known by this time) won 11 seats. The Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe's Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (OSCE-ODIHR) observed that the elections met international democratic standards. The following month, the government of Dumitru Braghis tendered its resignation. [1][10]

4.12 Another Presidential election took place on 4 April 2001, at which Vladimir Voronin was finally elected President, securing 71 of 89 votes cast by deputies of the new Parliament. Braghis received 15 votes, and another Communist candidate, Valerian Christea, received three; the 11 deputies of

the CDPP abstained from voting. Later that month, a new cabinet was approved with Vasile Tarlev as Prime Minister. [1]

4.13 A law on ethnic minorities, adopted by Parliament in July 2001, guaranteed for all ethnic minorities the right to education and training in their mother language, and the right to education from pre-school to secondary and higher in the Moldovan (Romanian) and Russian languages. In addition, the law stipulated that the publication of laws and official documents shall be printed in both Moldovan and Russian and that in areas with a special status of autonomy, street names and names of public buildings will also be indicated in the language of the autonomous region. [15a]

4.14 Presidential elections were held in the "Dniestr Republic" on 9 December 2001. Incumbent, Igor Smirnov, was declared the winner. Local observers reported that the actual voting was unfair, with considerable ballot box stuffing. Officials in the northern region of Kamenka reported that 103.6% of their voters cast ballots for Smirnov. [2a]

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Demonstrations in Chişinău 2002-2003

4.15 On 18 December 2001, the Communist government resurrected plans to make Russian language instruction compulsory, from the second grade onwards, in schools as of 1 January 2002. Education Minister Ilie Vancea claimed that this step had been taken after lobbying from many Russian-speaking parents. The move was condemned by critics as an attempt to bring Moldova further under Russian influence. The Romanian Foreign Ministry condemned the decision calling it a matter of "political interference in education and culture". [18b]

4.16 This sparked a demonstration in the capital, Chişinău, on 9 January 2002, attended by several thousand people and organised by the CDPP. The demonstrators were protesting about the alleged "re-Russification" of the country. The participants called on teachers and schoolchildren to boycott Russian language lessons. [13b][18a]

4.17 These protests continued on an almost daily basis throughout January, February, March and into April 2002, attracting crowds of up to 50,000 people. Demands were made for the resignation of the ruling government. In the face of these protests, the Government cancelled the plans to make Russian a compulsory language in schools. However, the protests continued aimed against other government moves to bring the country closer to Moscow. [13c][13d]

4.18 On 13 February 2002, the Government approved a decision to replace the "History of Romanians" study from the school curriculum and replace it with a "History of Moldovans" book, starting on September 2002. The book was commissioned by President Voronin and written by academic Vladimir Taranov. Taranov presented the view that the Moldovan language exists

which is different from the Romanian language and that differences also exist between those who live in Moldova and Romania. Prime Minister Tarlev stated that this represented an opportunity for the country to have its "own history." However, the move was widely perceived as another strand of the russification of the largest part of the population, as well as of non-Russian minorities living in the country. The Council of Europe urged the Moldovan authorities to introduce a moratorium on the subject. [15e][15f][15g][15h]

4.19 On 21 March 2002, one of the leaders of the CDPP and an organiser of the anti-government demonstrations, Vlad Cubreacov, was declared missing after he failed to return home from a party meeting the previous evening. The party claimed that the communist authorities, or those influenced by them, had abducted him. President Voronin denied the allegations and accused the CDPP of seeking to destabilise the country. [13d]

4.20 The Moldovan Supreme Court of Justice demanded that the CDPP stop demonstrations on the grounds that they were not authorised by Chişinău City Hall. The CDPP appealed against this ruling to the European Court of Human Rights. [15c][19]

4.21 On 24 April 2002, the Council of Europe passed a Parliamentary Assembly resolution urging an end to both the protests and prosecution by the government of demonstrators and CDPP deputies. Complying with this, the CDPP ended the protests on 29 April 2002 after 101 days. [15c][18e][25]

4.22 Vlad Cubreacov was found alive on 25 May 2002 on a road in the vicinity of the border with Transnistria, near the village of Ustia, some 50 kilometres northeast of Chişinău. He claimed to have been held by "Russian speakers". He said that during the previous night he had been taken out in a car, dropped off and told "to walk and not look back." He refused to disclose further details about his kidnappers, for fear of harming the police investigation. Prime Minister Vasile Tarlev claimed that Cubreacov's disappearance proved that the authorities were not involved in the kidnapping. Transnistria's "foreign minister" Valerii Litskay also denied any link to the abduction claiming that the Tiraspol authorities were being used as a scapegoat and that the most likely explanation for the kidnapping was that it had been staged by the CDPP to ensure public interest in the then-ongoing demonstrations. [18d]

4.23 Following mediation by Russia, Ukraine and the Organisation of Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE), a draft treaty on the status of Transnistria was published in the Moldovan state press in July 2002. The treaty determined Moldova to be a federal state with each part of the federation having its own constitution although the treaty did not state how many federal entities there would be. The state language would be Moldovan but different parts of the federation would have their own official language. The Moldovan Government cautiously welcomed the proposal. However, the Transnistrian leader, Igor Smirnov, claimed that the plan required further development. [13e][13f]

4.24 Protests, attracting 4,000 to 10,000 participants, organised by the CDPP, took place in Chişinău on 1 September 2002. The demonstrators were protesting against the proposed treaty and against the Governments' plans to introduce the Russian language into primary schools and Moldovan history courses into the national curriculum. Unlike earlier rallies, this protest took place after the approval of a CDPP request by the Chişinău mayor's office. [22b]

4.25 According to the Foreign and Commonwealth Office in February 2004, more demonstrations were held, as well as a parliamentary boycott by sections of the opposition, during the first months of 2003, and again in September of that year, but did not threaten the position of the Communist government. The May 2003 local elections confirmed the ruling Communist Party's strong showing; they won just under 50% of votes countrywide. Although the international election observers concluded that the elections were generally in line with international standards, the OSCE issued a press release expressing disappointment with several negative aspects of the campaign, noting in particular evidence of interference by the authorities and state-media bias during the campaign period. [38] (p4)

4.26 The CDPP held small scale demonstrations in September 2003, protesting against the Communist Party, and stated that they would begin picketing the Russian Embassy in Chişinău regarding Russian troop withdrawal from Transnistria. [42a]

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Relations with the Transnistrian Authorities

4.27 Despite the Moldovan government's agreement to giving Transnistria (also known as Transdniestria) broad autonomy in exchange for reunification, negotiations broke down towards the end of 2002. At the beginning of February 2003, President Voronin invited the Transnistrian authorities to join in writing a new constitution that would create a common state in which Transnistria would be a federal unit. On 24 February 2003 the EU and US announced an EU visa ban against those members of the Transnistrian leadership considered to be primarily responsible for the lack of co-operation to promote a political settlement of the conflict. The EU has reserved the right to consider additional targeted restrictive measures at a later date if the Transnistrians attempt to delay or block the process. Relations between the two regions worsened in March 2003 apparently after several EU countries and the United States of America acted on the Moldovan authorities' request to stop awarding visas to 17 Transnistrian politicians. The separatist authorities' response was to announce that Voronin and 12 other government officials would not be permitted to attend Moldova's Euro 2004 qualifier against the Netherlands in Tiraspol. [34a][36][37]

4.28 According to the Foreign and Commonwealth Office in February 2004, "In late November 2003, Russia produced a document setting out the

parameters for a settlement. This was at the initiative of President Putin and drafted by Kozak, the Deputy Head of the Russian Presidential Administration, following months of opaque negotiations with President Voronin's administration and the Transnistrian authorities. The Kozak document was drawn up in parallel to the OSCE-led negotiation and drafting of a text by the three mediators. The OSCE refused to endorse the document and the opposition parties within Moldova held widespread anti-government protests. Voronin initially welcomed the Russian paper but the planned signature on 25 November was cancelled along with a visit by President Putin. Negotiations resumed in 2004 but little progress has been made so far." [38] (p3)

4.29 The Foreign and Commonwealth Office stated further that, "A major factor is the presence of Russian troops from the former Soviet 14th Army and approximately 43,000 tonnes of arms and ammunition. The Russians and Moldovans signed an agreement on a 3-year timescale for the withdrawal of the Russian 14th Army forces in October 1994, but this was not ratified by the Duma so never entered force. The Istanbul OSCE Summit (November 1999) agreed a decision calling for full withdrawal of arms and ammunition from Transnistria or their destruction in situ by the end of 2002 and withdrawal of Russian forces. A few trains loaded with ammunition did leave the territory in 2002 but the Transnistrian authorities put obstacles in the way of complete withdrawal or destruction. As a result, at the OSCE Ministerial in Porto in December 2002, Russia successfully negotiated a new deadline for full withdrawal of Russian arms, ammunition and forces from Transnistria – 31 December 2003. From mid-March to mid-June 2003 approximately 16,000 tonnes was removed. However, in mid-June 2003, the Transnistrian authorities halted further loading or removal of ammunition. They claimed that they were blocking operations until Russia paid USD100m in assistance promised to reduce Transnistria's debt to the Russian gas monopoly Gazprom. The process has resumed but a substantial amount of the ammunition remains in Transnistria. Ministers at the OSCE Ministerial in Maastricht in December 2003 expressed regret at Russia's failure to meet the rescheduled deadline and stressed the need for the fulfilment of this commitment without further delay." [38] (p3)

For history prior to 1991, please refer to the Europa publication, source 1.

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5. State Structures

The Constitution

5.1 The Constitution of the Republic of Moldova was adopted by the Moldovan Parliament on 28 July 1994 and entered into force on 27 August. On 28 July 2000 amendments were enacted, which transformed Moldova into a parliamentary republic. Following alterations to the law on presidential

election procedure, approved on 22 September, the President of the Republic was, henceforth, to be elected by the legislature, rather than directly. [1]

5.2 The Republic of Moldova is a sovereign, independent, unitary and indivisible state. The rule of law, the dignity, rights and freedoms of the people, and the development of human personality, justice and political pluralism are guaranteed. The Constitution is the supreme law. The Constitution upholds principles such as human rights and freedoms, democracy and political pluralism, the separation and co-operation of the legislature, executive and judicial powers of the State, respect for international law and treaties, fundamental principles regarding property, free economic initiative and the right to national identity. The national language of the republic is Moldovan and its writing is based on the Latin alphabet, although the State acknowledges the right to use other languages spoken within the country. [1]

5.3 The Constitution grants Moldovan citizens their rights and freedoms and lays down their duties. All citizens are equal before the law; they should have free access to justice, are presumed innocent until proven guilty and have a right to an acknowledged legal status. The State guarantees fundamental human rights, such as the right to life and to physical and mental integrity, the freedoms of movement, conscience, expression, assembly and political association, and the enfranchisement of Moldovan citizens aged over 18. Moldovan citizens have the right of access to information and education, of health security, of establishing and joining a trade union, of working and of striking. The family, orphaned children and the disabled enjoy the protection of the State. Obligations of the citizenry include the payment of taxes and the defence of the motherland. [1]

5.4 In line with an initiative by President Voronin to give renewed impetus to the Moldova/Transnistria settlement negotiations, the Joint Constitutional Commission (JCC) was formed consisting of representatives from both sides plus observers from the mediator states, Russia and Ukraine, and the OSCE. The JCC was set up on the basis of a protocol agreed in the 18 March session of the negotiation process, which was subsequently endorsed by the Moldovan Parliament and the Transdniestrian 'Supreme Soviet', the legislative body of the unrecognized separatist region. According to the agreement, the JCC is to produce a draft text within six months. This will be followed by two months of public discussion and possible amendment. A nationwide referendum on the draft of a new constitution is to be held no later than 1 February 2004. Nationwide elections for a new, united government should then be held no later than 25 February 2005. [10b][18i][39a][39b]

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Citizenship and Nationality

5.5 The Law on Citizenship of Moldova was adopted on 10 August 2000. Citizens of the Republic of Moldova may not be citizens of other states, except

in cases provided by international agreements to which the Republic of Moldova is a party. Citizenship of Moldova is proven by an identity card, passport, certificate of birth in case of a child or a certificate issued by competent authorities of the Republic of Moldova. [29a]

5.6 Citizenship of the Republic of Moldova is acquired through birth, recognition, adoption, recovery or naturalisation or on the basis of international agreements to which the Republic of Moldova is a party. [29a]

5.7 Citizenship of the Republic of Moldova may be lost through renunciation, deprivation or on the grounds deriving from international agreements to which the Republic of Moldova is a party. [29a]

5.8 Citizenship of the Republic of Moldova may be revoked to a person by the decision of the President of the Republic of Moldova if that person has acquired the citizenship of the Republic of Moldova by way of fraud, false information or concealment of any relevant fact proved by court, if a person has voluntarily enrolled in a foreign military service, committed actions seriously prejudicing the vital interests of the state, as proved by the court, or if the person has voluntarily acquired the citizenship of another state that did not conclude an agreement on dual citizenship with the Republic of Moldova and does not renounce the citizenship of any of the states during one year. [29a]

5.9 Citizenship may be recovered under Article 17, for a person who has reached 18 years of age and who knows and observes the provisions of the Constitution, knows the national language sufficiently well to integrate into social life and who loses or renounces the citizenship of another state, if possessed, except in cases when the loss or the renunciation is not possible or cannot reasonably be requested. [29a]

5.10 The Moldovan Parliament passed a new law in June 2003 permitting dual citizenship. The law stipulates that Moldovan citizens who obtain citizenship of other states are allowed to retain their Moldovan citizenship. [42b]

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Political System

5.11 Parliament is the supreme legislative body and the sole legislative authority of Moldova. It consists of 101 members, directly elected for a four-year term. Members elect the Chairman of Parliament, also for a four-year term. Parliament holds two ordinary sessions per year. The Parliament's basic powers include: the enactment of laws, the holding of referendums, the provision of legislative unity throughout the country, the approval of state policy, the approval or suspension of international treaties. The election of state officials, the mobilisation of the armed forces and the declaration of the states of national emergency, martial law and war. [1]

5.12 The President of the Republic is the Head of State and is elected by the legislature for a four-year term. A candidate must be aged no less than 40 years, be a Moldovan citizen and a speaker of the official language. The candidate must be in good health and, with his or her application, must submit the written support of a minimum of 15 parliamentarians. A decision on the holding of a presidential election is taken by parliamentary resolution, and the election must be held no fewer than 45 days before the expiry of the outgoing President's term of office. To be elected President, a candidate must obtain the support of three-fifths of the parliamentary quorum. If necessary, further ballots must then be conducted, contested by the two candidates who received the most votes. The candidate who receives more votes becomes President. The same person may not hold the post of President for more than two consecutive terms. The President is allowed to participate in parliamentary proceedings and, after consultation with the parliamentary majority, is responsible for nominating a Prime Minister designate and a Government. If the President has committed a criminal or constitutional offence, the votes of two-thirds of the members of Parliament are required to remove the President from office; the removal must be confirmed by the Supreme Court of Justice, for a criminal offence, and by a national referendum, for a constitutional offence. [1]

5.13 Members of Parliament are elected via proportional representation, with the entire country considered a single electoral district. The same system is applied for both parliamentary and local elections. Political parties, electoral blocs and independent candidates can compete. Recent amendments to the election code have increased the threshold percentage requirement for parties and blocs in parliamentary elections from four to six percent of the valid votes and have reduced the requirement for individual candidates from four to three percent. Party leaders decide which seats on the electoral list to give to potential candidates, depending on the candidates' contributions. [10][17a]

5.14 Transnistria is viewed in Chişinău as part of Moldova, but in fact this eastern territory of the country is run as an independent state. The February 2001 parliamentary elections could not be conducted in the area due to a lack of co-operation from the Transnistrian authorities. As in earlier elections in 1994, 1996, and 1998, a small number of special polling stations were set up on the government-controlled right bank of the river Nistru and Transnistrian residents were invited to cross the river to vote. The voting at these stations was conducted in a proper manner. However, only a small percentage of the Moldovan citizens living in Transnistria managed to exercise their right to vote due, at least in part, to interference by the Transnistrian authorities as had occurred in previous elections. [2a][41][10][33a]

5.15 According to Europa - Eastern Europe, Russia and Central Asia 2004, a presidential election was held in Transnistria on 9 December 2001, when Igor Smirnov was re-elected with some 82% of the votes cast. [1] (p274) The 2003 US State Department Country Report on Human Rights Practices for Moldova states that, "Citizens' right to change their government was severely restricted in Transnistria. In the period prior to the 2001 'presidential' elections, authorities shut down a political party and a youth group, closed a

leftist party newspaper, and seized a press run. The authorities refused to register one potential presidential candidate and dismissed another from his job as mayor of Bender prior to the election. Authorities reportedly threatened workers with job loss and students with expulsion from their universities if they did not vote for the incumbent, Igor Smirnov. Local observers reported that the actual voting was unfair, with considerable ballot box stuffing. Officials in the northern region of Kamenka reported that 103.6 percent of their voters cast ballots for Smirnov." [2a] (pp10-11)

5.16 According to the Foreign and Commonwealth Office in February 2004, "Elections to the People's Assembly were held in the autonomous Gagauz region in late November/early December 2003. The Communist party and those loyal to it won the majority of seats. Independent candidates secured a small number of seats, while the principal opposition parties failed to win a single seat. Although the OSCE Mission to Moldova concluded that the elections were conducted in line with international standards for transparency, the Mission did express concern about deficiencies in protecting the secrecy of the vote, divergences in the implementation of the election law with regard to the use of mobile boxes and the presence of police within polling stations." [38] (p4)

5.17 Legislation was passed in March 2003 which revised the division of local authorities back to that of the Soviet period, namely 33 'rayons', replacing the 12 'judets' (the Moldovan/Romanian name for counties) which were the basis of local administration from 1999-2003. This reorganisation was outlined in the Communist Party's 2001 parliamentary election manifesto. The party had organised its own local branches according to this pattern in advance of the 2001 elections. The party has a much stronger local party network than any other party in Moldova, and as such faced accusations from opponents that the reorganisation gave the Communist Party a distinct advantage at the local elections. [38] (p4)

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Judiciary

5.18 The International Helsinki Federation's 2003 Annual Human Rights Report for Moldova states that, "The process of judicial reform that began in 1995 had brought about significant positive improvements in securing the independence of the judiciary, impartiality and due process guarantees, and had established a three-tier judicial system...After the Communist Party again came to power in 2001, several measures taken by the authorities undermined the judicial system and had a negative impact on the independence of the courts. For example, judges were dismissed and others placed under constant scrutiny. Moreover, judges were economically dependent upon the executive branch." [12a] (p5)

5.19 According to the 2003 US State Department Country Report on Human Rights Practices for Moldova, "The Constitution provides for an independent judiciary; however, official pressure and corruption of judges remained a

problem. There continued to be credible reports that local prosecutors and judges extorted bribes for reducing charges or sentences. Following a major reorganization in May, the judiciary consists of three levels: lower courts, courts of appeals, and the Supreme Court. A separate Constitutional Court has exclusive authority in cases regarding the constitutionality of draft and final legislation, decrees, and other government acts. While the Constitutional Court was generally regarded as fair and objective, observers frequently charged that other courts were corrupt or politically influenced." [2a] (pp3-4)

5.20 Every citizen has the right to free access to justice. Judges sitting in the courts of law and the Supreme Court of Justice are appointed by the President following proposals by the Higher Magistrates' Council. They are elected for a five-year term, and subsequently for a 10-year term, after which their term of office expires on reaching the age limit. The Higher Magistrates' Council is composed of 11 magistrates, who are appointed for a five-year term. It is responsible for the appointment, transfer and promotion of judges, as well as disciplinary action against them. The Prosecutor-General, who is appointed by Parliament, exercises control over the enactment of law, as well as defending the legal order and the rights and freedoms of citizens. [1]

5.21 The Constitutional Court is the sole authority of constitutional judicature in Moldova. It is composed of six judges, two each appointed by the President, parliament and the Higher Council of Magistrates, who are appointed for a six-year term. The Constitutional Court's powers include: the enforcement of constitutionality control over laws, decrees and government decisions, as well as international treaties endorsed by the republic; the confirmation of the results of elections and referendums; the explanation and clarification of the Constitution; and decisions over matters of the constitutionality of parties. The decisions of the Constitutional Court are final and are not subject to appeal. [1][23b]

5.22 In other recent decisions, the Constitutional Court approved constitutional amendments on the dissolution of courts within the Moldovan judicial system that duplicated the work of district courts; certified the appointment of judges by Parliament, and reduced from five years to four the terms of members of the Supreme Council of Magistrate. [17a]

5.23 The Constitution provides that the President, acting on the nomination of the Superior Court of Magistrates, appoints judges for an initial period of 5 years. Judges being considered for reappointment are required to undertake specialised judicial training. At the end of this training, they are subject to a test, which is evaluated by the Superior Council of Judges. [2a]

5.24 According to the 2003 US State Department Country Report on Human Rights Practices for Moldova, "The Prosecutor General's office is autonomous and answers to Parliament, and is responsible for criminal prosecution, the presentation of formal charges before a court, and the overall protection of the rule of law and civil freedoms. Prosecutors may open and close investigations without bringing the matter before a court, giving them considerable influence over the judicial process." [2a] (p4)

5.25 Moldova receives aid to reform its judiciary from donor countries and international organisations; the major technical assistance provider in this regard is the United States. [17a] The lack of financial independence of the judicial system remained an area of concern in 2001. While the Supreme Court exercised control over its own budget, all other 84 courts of the country remained financially subordinated to the Ministry of Justice. Meanwhile, the funds allocated to the courts were clearly insufficient and the judges underpaid. In another development, Article 12 (6) of the Law on the Status of the Judge was amended in order to prohibit a judge from swearing the judge oath for a number of reasons, including expression of his/her opinion on current political matters in the press or in TV and radio programmes. [12b]

5.26 On 26 December 2002 a law on the creation of a judiciary police force that would ensure the public order in the country's courtrooms, protect the sides involved in trials and aid in the execution of court rulings was adopted. This was implemented despite resistance from within the Interior Ministry for the previous five years due to cost. [28b]

5.27 On 12 February 2003 President Voronin dismissed the Justice Minister, Ion Morei, from his post. It was reported that Voronin has accused Morei of "incompetence" in connection with the stipulations his ministry had introduced to the law on the re-registration of political parties. [18b]

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Legal Rights/Detention

5.28 According to the 2003 US State Department Country Report on Human Rights Practices for Moldova, "The law prohibits arbitrary arrest and detention, and the Government generally observed these prohibitions in practice. A new Penal Code, drafted with the assistance of foreign legal advisors, took effect in June [2003]. The police are the primary law enforcement body in the country. During the first 4 months of 2003, 65 criminal cases had been instituted against police officers for bribery, robbery, and abuse of office. An internal affairs unit, reporting to the Minister of Interior, investigated minor incidents of corruption. The Center for Combating Economic Crimes and Corruption, which reports to the President, investigated more serious corruption cases. Police corruption remained a problem." [2a] (p3)

5.29 The US State Department reports further, "Judges issued arrest warrants based on cases presented by prosecutors. Under the Constitution and the law, authorities must promptly inform detainees of the reason for their arrest and the charges against them. Suspects may be detained without charge for 72 hours. Under the Constitution, the accused has the right to a hearing before a court regarding the legality of his arrest. Detainees normally were allowed family visits and had the right to a defense attorney...Authorities generally granted access to a lawyer only after a person had been detained for 24 hours; detainees were often presented with the charges against them without a lawyer present...No system of bail exists; in some cases, to arrange

release, a friend or relative was allowed to give a written pledge that the accused will appear for trial. Detainees accused of violent or serious crimes generally were not released before trial." [2a] (p3)

5.30 The 2003 US State Department also reports that, "Transnistrian authorities continued to exercise arbitrary detention as common practice. Transnistrian authorities usually applied arbitrary detention procedures to persons suspected of being critical of the regime and sometimes lasted up to several months." [2a] (p3)

5.31 According to Amnesty International, in 2002 conditions of detention in most police lock-ups and many prisons amounted to cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment. [4a]

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Death Penalty

5.32 In 1995, the Death Penalty was abolished for all crimes in the Republic of Moldova. [4b]

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Internal Security

5.33 According to the 2003 US State Department Country Report on Human Rights Practices for Moldova, "The Ministry of Internal Affairs is responsible for the police, while the Information and Security Service (ISS) controls other security organs. The Department of Border Guards constitutes a separate agency. The Parliament has constitutional authority to investigate the activities of the Ministry of Internal Affairs and the ISS and to ensure they comply with the law. The ISS can investigate crimes, but not arrest individuals. The civilian authorities maintained effective control of the security forces. Some members of the security forces committed human rights abuses." [2a] (p1)

5.34 During 2001, the regional delegation of the International Committee for the Red Cross (ICRC) organised several presentations and seminars for senior police officers and lecturers and students of police academies to raise awareness of international humanitarian law and human rights. [6]

5.35 The United Nations Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination voiced concerns, in March 2002, about reports of police violence against person belonging to minority groups, in particular the Roma population. The Committee recommended that the Government take all necessary measures to prevent and punish excessive use of force by members of the security forces against minorities. [3]

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Border Security and relations with neighbouring countries

5.36 Russian troops and weapons stationed in Transnistria since the Soviet period are due to be withdrawn by the end of 2003 under the terms of an agreement reached at the 2002 OSCE Ministerial in Porto (see paragraph 4.29 for further details). Moldova's relations with Russia were further strengthened in November 2001 when Presidents Voronin and Putin signed a 10-year Moldovan-Russian Basic Political Treaty of Friendship and Co-operation. The treaty confirmed Russia's prominent role in efforts to find a solution to the Transnistrian conflict and re-confirmed the Russian Government's desire to see the territorial integrity of Moldova. [23b]

5.37 Relations between the Moldovan and Transnistrian authorities worsened at the beginning of 2003 (see paragraph 4.27). However, relations between Romania and Moldova, which had become strained due to the election of the pro-Russian MPC in February 2001, showed signs of improvement in April 2003. Romania's Foreign Minister, Mircea Geoana, became the first high-ranking Romanian government official to visit Moldova since 2000 and stated that Romania would support Moldova's moves towards joining European organisations. [34a][34b] Subsequently Presidents Voronin and Iliescu had a cordial if unsubstantive meeting on 1 August 2003. [42c]

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Prison and Prison Conditions

5.38 While the Council of Europe's Anti-Torture Committee noted some improvements in prison conditions in 2002 [24], the 2003 US State Department Country Report on Human Rights Practices for Moldova reported that, "Conditions in most prisons in the country and in Transnistria remained harsh with serious overcrowding. Cell sizes did not meet local legal requirements or international standards. The incidence of malnutrition and disease, particularly tuberculosis, was high in all prisons. Conditions were particularly harsh in facilities for persons awaiting trial or sentencing, and included overcrowding, bad ventilation, and a lack of recreational and rehabilitation facilities." [2a] (p2)

5.39 The report states further that, "During the year, a local NGO launched a program with the Netherlands in which three Moldovan and three Dutch prisons exchanged information on security and training. Local NGOs also started programs to provide medicine, warm clothes and radios for prisoners and an Institute of Penal Reforms training program for prison staff... Male and female prisoners were held separately. The country had only one small facility, similar to a detention camp, for juveniles convicted of crimes, and one women's prison had a small section for juvenile girls... Pretrial detainees were held separately from convicted prisoners, although there was one report of convicted prisoners remaining in pretrial detention facilities due to prison overcrowding." [2a] (p2)

5.40 The report continues, "Government and independent human rights observers were generally permitted to visit prisons. The Moldovan Center for Human Rights made regular prison visits during the year. The Government cooperated with the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) and permitted visits to prisoners. Transnistrian authorities allowed the ICRC to visit prisons in Transnistria during the year." [2a] (p2)

5.41 Prisoners in Soroca city prison went on hunger strike for three days from 13 August 2002 as a protest against their detention conditions. According to Stefan Uritu, the chairman of the Moldovan Helsinki Committee for Human Rights, claimed that inmates were being held in cells with a high degree of humidity, where the walls are covered with mould, together with patients suffering from infectious diseases. Symptomatic of the lack of funding available for Moldovan penitentiaries, official statistics showed that the Government had only allocated 40 percent of the funding required for the maintenance of detention facilities. [15b]

5.42 In September 2002, the administration in the Transnistrian-controlled city of Tighina (Benderi) cut off the water and electricity to the local penitentiary, which runs a hospital for detainees suffering from tuberculosis. The Tighina city administration had earlier demanded, in a letter to President Vladimir Voronin, that the Moldovan government evacuate all inmates suffering from tuberculosis to other penitentiaries and to shut down the facility. The Moldovan Penitentiary Department (DIP) claimed that this was impossible, as there were no other appropriate facilities available. The Deputy Chief of the DIP also noted that "domestic and international experts have visited the hospital and concluded that it was not dangerous for the city residents." [15d]

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Military Service

5.43 Conscription exists and the legal basis for this is the 1992 'Law on Military Service'. All men between the ages of 18 and 40 are liable for military service. The length of military service is one year, three months in the case of university and college graduates. According to an amendment made on 18 July 2002, education institutions will be allowed to set up military departments and students who serve there will be exempted from military service. There are no reserve duties. Postponement and exemption from military service are possible under articles 18 to 20 of the 1992 Law on Military Service Obligation. Call-up for military service takes place at the age of 18. Only a small proportion, about 15 percent, of liable conscripts are actually recruited. Voluntary enlistment usually produces the requisite number of recruits. [9][22a]

5.44 It is not known if there are any under 18 year olds in government armed forces due to lack of information on voluntary recruitment age. There were no reports of child participation in the conflict between the Moldovan government and the separatist Transnistrian region. [32]

5.45 During 2001, the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) regional delegation assisted the Moldovan Ministry of Defence in several projects designed to heighten awareness of international humanitarian law within those attending military college and future officers. [6]

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Armed Forces

5.46 The armed forces are 11,000 strong, which is 0.26 percent of the population. Every year approximately 35,000 men reach conscription age. There are approximately 5,200 conscripts in the armed forces. [9]

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Conscription

5.47 Draft evasion and desertion are punishable under the criminal code. However, draft evasion is widespread, the reasons including poor conditions and human rights violations within the armed forces and the fear of being sent to the Dniestr region. Many conscripts reportedly simulate mental disorders in order to get exemption on medical grounds; others simply do not respond to call-up. Monitoring and punishing of draft evasion does not seem to be a priority for the authorities, as voluntary applications for military service are usually sufficient to obtain the requisite number of recruits. [9]

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Conscientious Objection

5.48 The right to conscientious objection is legally recognised under the 1991 Alternative Service Act. This law was passed by the Moldovan parliament when Moldova was still part of the former Soviet Union, as more and more Moldovan conscripts were declining to serve in the Red Army. The 1991 law is believed to accept religious, pacifist and political reasons as grounds for Conscientious Objection status. The length of substitute service is two years, twice the length of military service and can be performed in the national economy or the construction industry. [9]

5.49 The "legislation" of Transnistria does not provide for alternative civilian service. It obliges all its residents to serve in the Transnistrian army, even those who have citizenship of another country. Ill-treatment of soldiers by their seniors in the Transnistrian army is reported. [41]

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Medical Services

5.50 In 2000, there were 76 hospital beds and 36 doctors per 10,000 inhabitants. A number of measures were introduced in 1999, in an attempt to reduce spending on health care, including the closure of several village hospitals and the loss of 7,000 hospital beds. In 2001, the state budget allocated 542 million lei (9.6 percent of total expenditure) to health care. The Moldovan health service is under-funded and somewhat in a state of decay. [1][40]

5.51 In 1999, primary/medical care was delivered in 473 outpatient/polyclinic establishments, 187 of which were part of the Ministry of Health's system, 78 of which were subordinate to other ministries and departments, and 208 of which were independent. In the same year, inpatient care was provided in 150 hospitals. [30]

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HIV/AIDS

5.52 There is only one specialised HIV centre in Moldova. The HIV test is free of charge for those at high risk. There are no adequate referral centres for HIV-infected persons, except for psychological counselling. [21a]

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Educational System

5.53 Until the late 1980s the system of education was an integral part of the Soviet system, with most education in the Russian language. In 1990 and 1991 there were extensive changes to the education system, with Romanian literature and history added to the curriculum. In the early 1990s, many Russian-language schools were closed. [1]

5.54 According to Europa - Eastern Europe, Russia and Central Asia 2004, "Primary education begins at seven years of age and lasts for four years. Secondary education, beginning at 11, lasts for a maximum of seven years, comprising a first cycle of five years and a second of two years. In 1996 total enrolment at primary and secondary schools was equivalent to 87 percent of the school-age population (86 percent of males, 87 percent of females). Primary enrolment in 2000/01 was equivalent to 78 percent of children in the relevant age group, while the comparable figure for secondary enrolment in that year was 68 percent. In 2001, budgetary expenditure on education was 924 million lei (16.3 percent of total spending)." [1] (p296)

5.55 The Government began, in 2001, to introduce some so-called "corrections" to the educational system, based on the Communists' electoral agenda. Private education institutions, which exist in greater numbers at the college and university level than at the secondary and high school level, will have more flexibility than public institutions to establish their own curriculums. [17a]

5.56 According to the 2003 US State Department Country Report on Human Rights Practices for Moldova, "During the year, Transnistrian authorities increasingly pressured schools teaching Romanian in Latin script (rather than Cyrillic script used in Soviet Moldova) and using the curriculum of the central Ministry of Education. In September 2002, authorities shut down a public school in Grigoriopol for clandestinely teaching in Latin script, after which children took day trips to another city for instruction. In December 2002, the parents of these children were threatened with dismissal from their jobs in enterprises and institutions run by the Transnistrian authorities. Although the OSCE helped negotiate a formula in September to allow Latin-script schools to register in line with Transnistrian requirements, Transnistrian authorities continued to impose logistical and legal hurdles to impede Latin-script schools from functioning normally." [2a] (p7)

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6. Human Rights

6.A Human Rights Issues

General

6.1 In its 2003 Country Report on Human Rights Practices for Moldova, the US State Department summarised the situation there as follows: "The Government generally respected the human rights of its citizens; however, there were problems in some areas, and the human rights record of the Transnistrian authorities was poor. Citizens generally had the right to change their government, although this right was severely restricted in Transnistria. Authorities reportedly tortured and beat some persons, particularly persons in police custody and Roma. Prison conditions remained harsh, with attempts to improve them hampered by lack of funding. Security forces were widely believed to monitor political figures, use unauthorized wiretaps, and at times conduct illegal searches. There were some restrictions on freedom of the press, including defamation and calumny laws that encouraged self-censorship. During the year, the Government adopted new limits on freedom of association. A few religious groups continued to encounter difficulties in obtaining official registration. Societal violence and discrimination against women, children, and Roma persisted. There were some limits on workers' rights. Trafficking in women and girls remained a very serious problem. The Transnistrian authorities reportedly continued to use torture and arbitrary arrest and detention. Prison conditions in Transnistria remained harsh, and three ethnic Moldovan members of the Ilascu group remained in prison despite charges by international groups that their trials were biased and unfair. Human rights groups were not permitted to visit prisoners in Transnistria. Transnistrian authorities harassed independent media, restricted freedom of association and of religion, and discriminated against Romanian-speakers." [2a] (p1)

6.2 The US State Department also reported that in 2003, "A number of domestic and international human rights groups generally operated without government restriction, investigating and publishing their findings, except in the Transnistrian region...Citizens may appeal to the ECHR in Strasbourg if they believe their rights have been violated or that national laws are not in accordance with the European Convention on Human Rights. During the year, citizens of the country filed 27 complaints with the ECHR." [2a] (p11)

6.3 The US State Department reported further that, "The law provides for three parliamentary advocates (ombudsmen), and an independent center for human rights, the Moldovan Human Rights Center. Parliament appoints the three advocates, who have equal rights and responsibilities, for 5-year terms. Advocates may be removed from office only by a two-thirds vote of Parliament. Parliamentary advocates are empowered to examine claims of human rights violations, advise Parliament on human rights problems, submit legislation to the Constitutional Court for review, and oversee the operation of the Moldovan Human Rights Center. Center personnel provide training for lawyers and journalists, visit jails, make recommendations on legislation, and conduct seminars and training programs for police, penitentiary personnel, judges, prosecutors, public administration officials, and law students. The majority of complaints received by the center involved private property violations, labor rights, access to justice, personal security, right to life, and personal dignity. Transnistrian authorities reportedly have attempted to gain control over NGOs in the region by having security officials 'invite' their leaders to their offices to discuss their registration and by pressuring landlords not to renew office leases for some." [2a] (p11)

6.4 The US State Department notes that, "The Constitution provides that persons are equal before the law regardless of race, sex, disability, or social origin; however, societal discrimination against women and some ethnic minorities, particularly Roma, persisted. There were remedies for violations, such as orders for redress of grievances, but these were not enforced in all cases." [2a] (p11)

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Torture

6.5 According to the 2003 US State Department Country Report on Human Rights Practices for Moldova, "The Constitution prohibits torture and other cruel, inhuman, or degrading treatment or punishment; however, there were reports that police employed cruel and degrading arrest and interrogation methods and that guards beat prison inmates." [2a] (p2)

6.6 In its Annual Report for 2003, the International Helsinki Federation for Human Rights (IHF) states that, "The new Penal Code, published in September 2002 and entering into force in June 2003, no longer includes article 101 on torture. Its abolition has been justified by the fact that other articles in the Penal Code refer to 'abuse of duties'...Documented forms of torture included the use of electric shocks, hosing detainees with cold water,

crushing fingers, pulling out nails, beating with a truncheon, holding gas masks on the face while holding the ventilation, etc." [12a] (p7)

6.7 According to the Canadian Immigration and Refugee Board in November 2001, an International Helsinki Federation for Human Rights (IHF) report of 2001, which covered events in 2000, states that, according to the Moldovan Helsinki Committee, the Government has been reticent to engage in discussions on the shortcomings of Moldovan legislation and practices with regard to torture, ill treatment and misconduct by Moldovan officials. The IHF report goes on to state that the Government invoked the lack of financial, material and human resources for not addressing such issues, reasons that the Moldovan Helsinki Committee found to be untenable. [33f]

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Extrajudicial Killings

6.8 The 2003 US State Department Country Report on Human Rights Practices for Moldova notes that in 2003, "There were no reports of the arbitrary or unlawful deprivation of life committed by the Government or its agents in the country or its separatist region." [2a] (p2)

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Disappearances

6.9 The 2003 US State Department Country Report on Human Rights Practices for Moldova notes that in 2003, "There were no reports of politically motivated disappearances." [2a] (p2)

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Freedom of Speech and the Media

6.10 According to the 2003 US State Department Country Report on Human Rights Practices for Moldova, "The Constitution and the law provide for freedom of speech and of the press; however, the Government sometimes restricted these rights, applying the electoral law, the Civil Code, and a calumny law selectively against some critics and intimidating some journalists into practicing self-censorship. Nevertheless, there was an active, independent media. The print media expressed a wide variety of political views and commentary. The Government owned two newspapers and a news agency; national and city governments subsidized a number of newspapers. Political parties and professional organizations, including trade unions, also published newspapers, most of which had a circulation of less than 15,000 copies...The number of media outlets that were not owned and operated by the Government or a political party increased. However, most of these independent media remained in the service of, and secured large subsidies from, political movements and commercial or ethnic interests." [2a] (p5)

6.11 In its Press Freedom Survey for 2002, Freedom House notes that, "The Constitution prohibits insulting the State, and a calumny law forbids defaming

senior government officials. Nearly 1,000 libel suits have been filed in the decade since Moldova became independent." [17b] (p39) In its 2003 report, the US State Department notes that, "Parties filing lawsuits must distinguish between their public and private roles and must prove that the information was false, defamatory, and published recklessly or with intentional malice. Plaintiffs generally have lost in cases in suits filed against journalists and media organs...Print and broadcast journalists reportedly practiced self-censorship regularly due to government and public figures' use of the electoral and calumny laws to sue for defamation and complaints from authorities of news coverage." [2a] (p6)

6.12 In its 2002 annual report, Reporters without Frontiers notes that, "The press is generally affiliated to the political parties on which it is financially dependent, a situation that did not favour impartial coverage of the elections in February 2001." [5] At that time, according to Freedom House in 2002, privately held television stations and newspapers were accused of clear bias towards individual parties and candidates. [17b] (p39) According to BBC News Online in February 2004, "Political parties publish their own newspapers, which often criticise the government. Moldovan editions of Russian titles are among the most-popular Russian-language publications. In 2003 there were more than 20 radio stations and some 30 TV stations on the air, many of them rebroadcasting stations from Russia and Romania. The authorities in the breakaway Transdniestrian region operate their own TV and radio outlets." [13g] (p3)

6.13 In March 2003, Infotag reported that legal changes facilitated the authorities' interference in the Teleradio Moldova company's work. [35] The 2003 US State Department Country Report on Human Rights Practices for Moldova noted, "In 2002, some Teleradio Moldova staff protested alleged government censorship, triggering calls for the transformation of Teleradio Moldova into a public institution. Following recommendations from the Council of Europe, Parliament passed bills in July 2002 and February to convert Teleradio Moldova into a public institution. The opposition remained dissatisfied with the law, arguing that civil society was still not involved adequately in supervising the activity of Teleradio Moldova and that the law still provided for many forms of direct political interference in the company's activity. Further amendments to the Law on Teleradio Moldova, adopted by Parliament in November, provided for the liquidation of the company, dismissal of all staff, and the creation of a new public institution. However, critics argued that this step made it easier to dismiss journalists for political motives." [2a] (p6)

6.14 The US State Department Report also notes that in 2003, "The Government did not restrict foreign publications. However, most were not widely circulated due to high costs. Russian newspapers were available, and some published special Moldovan weekly supplements. The country received television and radio broadcasts from Romania, France, and Russia. A small number of cable subscribers received a variety of foreign television programs, including news programs. Few residents had satellite television. Parliament has prohibited the use of locally based foreign media outlets for political

campaigning. The Government did not restrict access to the Internet or academic freedom." [2a] (p6)

6.15 Freedom House reported in 2002 that, "In Transnistria, freedom of speech and access to information is limited. Local authorities censor local news agencies, newspapers, and television and radio stations. The majority of media are state-owned. If their content does not conform to guidelines set out by the separatist regime, their managers and journalists risk being fired or arrested. The regime in Transnistria prohibits the distribution of national newspapers printed in Chişinău." [17a] (p290) According to the US State Department's 2003 report, "Of the two major newspapers in Transnistria, one was controlled by the separatist authorities, and the other by the Tiraspol city government. There was one independent weekly newspaper in Bender and another in the northern Transnistrian city of Ribnitsa. At times, the independent newspapers criticized the Transnistrian regime, for which the separatist authorities harassed them. Other print media in Transnistria did not have a large circulation and appeared only on a weekly or monthly basis; some of them also criticized local authorities. Most Moldovan newspapers did not circulate widely in Transnistria, although they were available in Tiraspol." [2a] (pp6-7)

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Freedom of Religion

6.16 In its 2003 International Religious Freedom Report for Moldova, the US State Department notes that, "The Constitution provides for freedom of religion, and the Government generally respects this right in practice; however, the law includes restrictions that at times inhibit the activities of some religious groups. There was no change in the status of respect for religious freedom during the period covered by this report [2003], and government policy continued to contribute to the generally free practice of religion." However, the report goes on to state that the Government continued to uphold its earlier decisions to deny some groups registration. It also states that, "There is no state religion; however, the Moldovan Orthodox Church receives some special treatment from the Government. A number of minority religious groups in the separatist region of Transnistria continued to be denied registration and subjected to official harassment." [2b] (p1)

6.17 The report states further that, "The predominant religion is Christian Orthodox. More than 90 percent of the population nominally belong to one of two Orthodox denominations. The Moldovan Orthodox Church, according to the State Service on Religious Issues, has 1,080 parishes; the Bessarabian Orthodox Church has 84 parishes. In addition, followers of the Old Rite Russian Orthodox Church (Old Believers) make up approximately 3.6 percent of the population. The religious traditions of the Orthodox Church are entwined with the culture and patrimony of the country. Many self-professed atheists routinely celebrate religious holidays, cross themselves, and even light candles and kiss icons if local tradition and the occasion demand. Other faiths include Roman Catholics, Baptists, Pentecostals, Seventh-day

Adventists, Muslims, Jehovah's Witnesses, Baha'is, Jews, followers of Reverend Moon, Molocans (a Russian group), Messianic Jews (who believe that Jesus was the Messiah), Lutherans, Presbyterians, Hare Krishnas, and some other charismatic Christian and evangelical Christian groups. The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (Mormons) has 2 congregations, with approximately 220 members." [2b] (p1)

6.18 According to the 2003 US State Department Country Report on Human Rights Practices for Moldova, "The law requires religious groups to register with the Government. Unregistered religious organizations are not permitted to buy land or obtain construction permits for churches or seminaries...The Law on Religion permits proselytizing, but explicitly prohibits 'abusive proselytizing,' which is defined as 'an attempt to influence someone's religious faith through violence or abuse of authority.'...The law provides for restitution to politically repressed or exiled persons whose property was confiscated during the successive Nazi and Soviet regimes. This regulation has been extended in effect to religious communities; however, the Moldovan Orthodox Church has been favored over other religious groups in this area and has recovered nearly all of its property. In cases where property was destroyed, the Government offered alternative compensation." [2a] (p8)

6.19 According to a report in 2002 by the Interdepartmental Commission for Co-ordination of the State Policy in the Settlements on the Left Bank of the Dniester River, entitled Human Rights in the Transdnistrian Region of the Republic of Moldova, freedom of religion in Transnistria is subject to considerable limitations. [41] (p20) In addition to problems for Jehovah's Witnesses there (see below), the 2003 US State Department Country Report on Human Rights Practices for Moldova also notes that, "In recent years, Transnistrian authorities have denied registration to Baptists, Methodists, and the Church of the Living God. Unregistered religious groups were not allowed to hold public assemblies, such as revival meetings. The law in Transnistria prohibits renting houses, premises of enterprises, or 'cultural houses' for prayer meetings. Transnistrian authorities have told evangelical religious groups meeting in private homes that they did not have the correct permits to use their residences as churches...Non-Orthodox groups in Transnistria complained that they generally were not allowed to rent property and often were harassed during religious services." [2a] (pp8-9)

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Bessarabian Church

6.20 In its 2003 International Religious Freedom Report, the US State Department notes that, "The Bessarabian Orthodox Church was formed in 1992 when a number of priests broke away from the Moldovan Orthodox Church, which is subordinate to the Moscow Patriarchate. The Bessarabian Orthodox Church, which regards itself as the legal and canonical successor to the pre-World War II Romanian Orthodox Church in Bessarabia (the territory bounded by the Nistru, Prut, and Danube Rivers and the Black Sea, of which

most of present-day Moldova is a part) subordinated itself to the Bucharest Patriarchate of the Romanian Orthodox Church...In September 2001, the Government declared the Moldovan Orthodox Church the successor to the pre-World War II Romanian Orthodox Church for purposes of all property ownership, although no attempt has been made to seize those properties already in Bessarabian Church hands." [2b] (p3)

6.21 According to Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty, the Bessarabian Church was registered on 30 July 2002, after a ten-year struggle to do so. [18c] However, the 2003 US State Department Country Report on Human Rights Practices for Moldova states that, "Despite being able to register and operate as a legal religion, representatives of the Bessarabian Orthodox Church claimed that their property rights were still being violated." [2a] (p8)

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Church of the True Orthodox of Moldova

6.22 According to the 2003 US State Department Country Report on Human Rights Practices for Moldova, "Authorities have not registered the Church of True Orthodox-Moldova despite a 2002 Supreme Court ruling in its favor. The SSR and the Government attempted a variety of appeals and were still ordered to register the church. Many delays in the court process have prevented a final decision." [2a] (p8)

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Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints (Mormons)

6.23 In its 2003 International Religious Freedom Report, the US State Department notes that, "The Mormons have continuously faced bureaucratic obstacles and have not been successful in obtaining registration; they have indicated their intention to attempt to register now that the registration has been simplified." [2b] (p4)

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Spiritual Organisation of Muslims in Moldova

6.24 In its 2003 International Religious Freedom Report, the US State Department notes that, "Although the amendments to the Law on Religions were intended to simplify the registration process and make the process essentially automatic, the State Service on Religious Issues continues to deny the registration of some groups, such as the Spiritual Organization of Muslims. The Muslims' application was denied because the State Service claimed their documents were not in order." [2b] (p2) The report continues, "On July 27, 2002, individuals from the Ministry of Interior detained and questioned for 3 hours the leader of the Spiritual Organization of Muslims in Moldova. The Muslim leader was told that he was detained on charges related to terrorism, although the Ministry of Interior never provided additional information or clarification on these initial charges. Before being released, he was interrogated regarding his

connection with the NGO 'Calauza,' a local Islamic organization that sponsors adult summer camps to study the Koran. On July 28, 2002, individuals from the Ministry of Interior detained and allegedly beat two members of Calauza. The members of Calauza were interrogated in a similar manner as the leader of the Muslims, and questioned about whether their organization or summer camps had ties to terrorist organizations." [2b] (p4)

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Seventh-Day Adventists

6.25 According to the Canadian Immigration and Refugee Board in November 2001, Seventh-Day Adventists had, in the past, had difficulty renting public buildings for their religious activities and members might have had difficulty relocating because of isolated disputes. However, there were no reports of harassment against members of the Adventist churches; they were considered legal and officially registered. [33e]

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Baptists

6.26 In its 2003 International Religious Freedom Report, the US State Department notes that, "The Baptist community in Transnistria remains unregistered. In previous years, the Baptists in Transnistria complained of increased harassment from the authorities; however, during the period covered by this report the Baptists reported no direct harassment. In addition, authorities did not threaten to destroy the church, and the group continued to meet in the same building. In the February 2001 Moldovan parliamentary elections, a reported 80 percent of those persons from Transnistria who crossed the Dniester River to vote (voting was not allowed in Transnistria itself), voted for the independent candidate and Baptist minister, Valeriu Ghiletschi." [2b] (p5)

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Judaism

6.27 The US State Department's 2003 International Religious Freedom Report notes that, "According to the most recently available numbers, the Jewish community has approximately 31,300 members, including approximately 20,000 living in Chisinau; 3,100 in Balti and surrounding areas; 2,200 in Tiraspol; 2,000 in Benderi; and 4,000 in small towns." [2b] (p1) The report states further that, "In February 2003, eight tombstones were destroyed in a Jewish cemetery in Balti. However, according to a leading Rabbi in Chisinau, it is not clear whether this event was caused by anti-Jewish sentiment." [2b] (p5)

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Jehovah's Witnesses

6.28 According to the 2003 US State Department Country Report on Human Rights Practices for Moldova, "The Government has not taken legal action against individuals or organizations for proselytizing, with the exception of a member of Jehovah's Witnesses who was fined approximately \$27 (400 lei) for door-to-door preaching." The report goes on to mention that members of Jehovah's Witnesses have been the target of articles criticising their beliefs and legitimacy. [2a] (p8) As to the situation in Transnistria, the same source states that, "Authorities in Grigoriopol and the village of Mayak reportedly arrested several members of Jehovah's Witnesses for proselytizing and other religious activity. The Transnistrian Supreme Court did not rule by the end of the year on the Tiraspol public prosecutor's 2002 suit to annul the registration and ban the activities of Jehovah's Witnesses. Under a July 2002 letter from the Transnistrian Commissioner for Religions and Cults, Transnistrian authorities are to consider the Jehovah's Witnesses as illegal until the court case is resolved. Transnistrian state officials have reportedly accused Jehovah's Witnesses of a lack of patriotism and of spreading Western influence. Additionally, Transnistrian authorities have developed a new textbook that is to be used at all school levels, which reportedly contains negative and defamatory information regarding the Jehovah's Witnesses." [2a] (pp8-9)

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Freedom of Assembly and Association

6.29 According to the 2003 US State Department Country Report on Human Rights Practices for Moldova, "The Constitution provides for freedom of assembly, and the Government generally respected this right in practice. Mayors' offices issue permits for demonstrations and may consult the Government if a demonstration is likely to be extremely large; permits were issued routinely and without bias. The Transnistrian authorities usually did not permit free assembly, and on those occasions when they did issue permits, they often harassed organizers and participants. Regional authorities at times organized mass rallies in their own support and called them 'spontaneous rallies by the people.'" [2a] (p7)

6.30 The report states further that, "The Constitution provides for freedom of association and states that citizens are free to form parties and other social and political organizations; however, Article 41 of the Constitution states that organizations that are 'engaged in fighting against political pluralism,' the 'principles of the rule of law,' or 'the sovereignty and independence or territorial integrity' of the country are unconstitutional. Small parties that favor unification with Romania have charged that this provision is intended to impede their political activities; however, no group has been prevented from forming as a result of this provision. Private organizations, including political parties, were required to register, but applications were approved routinely. There were 23 political parties at year's end...Transnistrian authorities

restricted freedom of association by intimidation and prosecution for alleged offenses or on invented charges." [2a] (p7)

Political Activists

6.31 According to Freedom House in 2002, "Under current legislation, the process of registering a political party or movement is not overly difficult. The main task is to collect 5,000 signatures from the new party or movement's supporters." [17a] (p287) According to the 2003 US State Department Country Report on Human Rights Practices for Moldova, "The Constitution provides citizens with the right to change their government peacefully, and citizens exercised this right in practice in most of the country through periodic, free, and fair elections held on the basis of universal suffrage; however, this right was restricted in Transnistria." [2a] (p9) The report states further that, "The Government selectively enforced regulations, including inspections and tax auditing, for individuals and businesses that belong to or support opposition parties." [2a] (p10)

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Employment Rights

6.32 According to the 2003 US State Department Country Report on Human Rights Practices for Moldova, "On July 1, the legal minimum monthly wage was raised to approximately \$23.30 (340 lei) for private sector employees and approximately \$17 (250 lei) for government employees. Minimum wages did not provide a decent standard of living for a worker and family. According to preliminary data from the Department of Statistics, the average monthly salary from January to July was approximately \$57 (818 lei). The average monthly salary was approximately \$66 (941 lei) in the private sector and approximately \$46 (657 lei) in the public sector. Due to severe budgetary constraints, both the Government and private sector employers often did not meet employee payrolls. The Constitution sets the maximum workweek at 40 hours, with extra compensation for overtime, and the Labor Code provides for at least 1 day off per week. The Government is required to establish and monitor safety standards in the workplace. Unions may strike and ask a court to impose a fine if safety standards are not met. Workers have the right to refuse to work if working conditions represent a serious threat to their health. In practice, poor economic conditions have led enterprises to economize on safety equipment and show little concern for worker safety. Workers often did not know their rights in this area." [2a] (p15)

6.33 The report also states that, "The law provides for collective bargaining and the right to organize unions, and the Government generally respected these rights in practice. The Government, management, and unions negotiated national minimum wages in tripartite talks. Branch unions for particular industries negotiated with management and the government ministries responsible for that industry. Tripartite negotiations could, and often

did, set wages higher than the national minimum, particularly in profitable industries. At the enterprise level, union and management negotiated wages directly and could set wages higher than negotiators at the industry level. Arbitration committees typically settled workplace labor disputes. If an arbitration committee failed to settle a dispute, it could be taken to the Courts of First Appeals. Court decisions involving the restitution of salary or a position were not implemented in all cases." [2a] (p14)

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Trade unions and the right to strike

6.34 According to the 2003 US State Department Country Report on Human Rights Practices for Moldova, "The Constitution and law provide for the right to establish or join trade unions, and workers exercised this right in practice...The law prohibits discrimination against workers for union membership or activities, and there were no reports that employers took action against union members for their activities. The law provides that employers may not fire union leaders from their jobs without the consent of their superior union; there were no reports of such firings during the year...Government workers and workers in essential services such as health care and energy do not have the right to strike. In practice, unions in other sectors may strike if two-thirds of their members vote to do so by secret ballot. During the year, there were no general or country-wide strikes, although teachers and doctors held local strikes in Edinet and Chisinau." [2a] (p14)

6.35 In 2002, Freedom House reported that, "Although trade unions in Moldova have been established in almost all sectors of the economy and in public institutions, they are far from effective in defending employees' rights. The trade unions resemble their Soviet-era predecessors rather than acting as workers' advocates in the Western sense. In late 2000, the main trade union broke into two separate unions: the Trade Union Confederation of Moldova (TUCM), the direct successor of the previous federation, and Solidaritate (Solidarity), a new organisation. The TUCM accounts for about 80 percent of all union members in Moldova, with the rest belonging to Solidarity. TUCM members come from the public sector as well as the agriculture and agricultural processing sectors, radio electronics, medicine, education and cultural institutions. Solidarity members are employed in industry, transport, telecommunications, construction and social services. The TUCM has been a member of the International Labour Organisation since 1992." [17a] (pp288-289)

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People Trafficking

6.36 Although the International Organisation for Migration (IOM) acknowledged in 2001 that there was a general lack of official statistics for trafficking, [21b] the IOM also claimed in August 2002 that, "Moldova is the main country of origin for the trafficking of women and children for the purpose of forced prostitution in Western Europe, Balkans and the Middle East." [20] In its 2003 Country Report on Human Rights Practices for Moldova, the US State Department notes that, "The law prohibits trafficking in persons;

however, trafficking in women and girls was a very serious problem. There were reports of involvement by some government officials in this trade; however, no official charges were made. The law prohibits trafficking and provides for severe penalties, ranging from 7 to 25 years in prison. Sentences for trafficking in children run from 10 years to life imprisonment. The penalty is 15 to 25 years in prison and confiscation of property for repeated or serious offenses, such as trafficking of groups, minors, or pregnant women; through kidnapping, trickery or abuse of power; with violence; or by a criminal organization." [2a] (p15)

6.37 The report also refers to information obtained from various NGOs: "According to the NGO Partners for Community, the target population for traffickers was young women, often minors, in rural areas. Women and girls typically accepted job offers in other countries, ostensibly as dancers, models, nannies, or housekeepers. In many areas, friends or acquaintances approached young women and offered them help getting good jobs abroad. This 'friend of a friend' approach most often was used in the countryside. Save the Children and the Association of Women in Law reported that many of the traffickers were women who targeted young girls in their own localities. Once they arrived at their destinations, traffickers took their passports, required them to 'repay' sizeable sums, and forced them into sexual bondage. Traffickers commonly recruited women from rural villages, transported them to larger cities, and then trafficked them abroad. Another trafficking pattern involved orphans who must leave orphanages when they graduate from school, usually at the age of 16 or 17, and have no source of funds for living expenses or continuing education. Some orphanage directors reportedly sold information on when orphan girls were to be turned out of their institutions to traffickers, who approached them as they left." [2a] (p16)

6.38 According to the same report, "Widespread corruption and lack of resources prevent adequate border control and monitoring of traffickers, particularly in Transnistria. Border guard and migration officials' salaries were low and frequently not paid regularly, making them vulnerable to bribery out of the large profits of the trafficking industry. Critics charged that the Government did not do enough to prosecute traffickers. According to IOM, trafficking was difficult to prosecute because the crime took place in another country and perpetrators could be tried only if victims testified against them. Victims generally refused to testify because traffickers threatened retaliation against them or their families. This was particularly true in rural areas in closer, tight-knit societies where the fear and chances of being identified as well as stigmatized was much greater. The law provides for a witness protection program, and police have placed guards outside of witnesses' homes." [2a] (p16)

6.39 According to Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty in March 2003, the Prosecutor General reported greater success in the prosecution of sex-slave traders, stating that the prosecution rate almost doubled in 2002 compared to the previous year. Although he admitted it remained a chronic problem he said that the Government has intensified its fight against forced prostitution. [18g]

6.40 The 2003 US State Department Country Report on Human Rights Practices for Moldova notes measures taken by the government to address the problem: "The Government took some steps to prevent the trafficking of women and assist victims, although it only slowly began to address the problem and focused primarily in the area of legislation and prosecution. In September, a government working group, the National Committee on Anti-Trafficking, gained its first full-time staff person and initiated weekly meetings. Local committees were created in each of region of the country, and officials of various ministries and local governments were required to present reports on their anti-trafficking efforts to the National Committee. A special law enforcement unit within the Ministry of Internal Affairs also continued to operate. The Government provided specialized training to trafficking investigators through the Ministry of Internal Affairs and the Ministry of Labor, funded by the OSCE and the Council of Europe. The country also participated in a Southeast European Cooperative Initiative Human Trafficking Task Force. The Government cooperated with Belarus, Ukraine, and Russia in investigating trafficking cases, as well as with Interpol in cases in Serbia and Montenegro. There were no government-operated assistance programs for victims. With foreign assistance, several NGOs worked to combat trafficking through information campaigns, repatriation assistance, temporary housing and medical care for victims, and job training." [2a] (pp16-17)

6.41 The OSCE Mission continued its activity in the establishment of a nation-wide anti-trafficking co-ordinating committee, including representatives of the Government, international organisations and NGOs and together with the ODIHR provided expert support for the Moldovan parliament in the drafting and adoption of anti-trafficking legislation. [8] According to the IOM in September 2002, its office in Chişinău is also implementing an apprenticeship programme with the Ministry of Labour. Its aim is to effectively reintegrate women into society, facilitate employment and avoid re-trafficking. The programme plans to fill 100 to 150 positions in various selected enterprises. [21a] (p5)

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Freedom of Movement

6.42 On freedom of movement within the country, foreign travel, emigration, and repatriation, the US State Department 2003 Country Report on Human Rights Practices notes that, "The Constitution and law provide for these rights, and the Government generally respected them in practice; however, authorities sometimes restricted travel to and from the separatist Transnistrian region. The Government did not restrict travel within the country, and there were no closed areas except the military depot at Colbasna controlled by the Transnistrian separatist authorities. Travel between Transnistria and the rest of the country was not prevented; however, separatist authorities often stopped and searched incoming and outgoing vehicles and hindered movement by OSCE representatives on several occasions. Although the

village was controlled by the Government under cease-fire terms, Transnistrian authorities interfered with, and at times blocked, farmers from the Transnistrian village of Dorotcaia from traveling to government-controlled areas to sell their produce." [2a] (p9)

6.43 The report continues, "Citizens generally were able to depart from and return to the country freely; however, there were some restrictions on emigration. Close relatives who are dependent on a potential emigrant for material support must give their concurrence. The Government also may deny permission to emigrate if the applicant had access to state secrets; however, such cases were very rare, and none were reported during the year. A large number of citizens were working in foreign countries without legal status. Estimates on emigration from official sources were inconsistent and largely anecdotal; the Government estimated that between 600,000 and 800,000 citizens were working outside the country, the vast majority of them illegally. Media and independent NGO sources suggested that the number of citizens working abroad was approximately one million. The majority worked in Russia, Portugal, Italy, Spain, Greece, and Romania." [2a] (p9)

6.44 According to the OSCE's Annual Report of 2001, "The [OSCE] Mission [to Moldova] promoted, facilitated and sought support for a number of projects, which would encourage contacts and reconciliation between authorities and citizens on the left and right banks of the Dniestr River. For example, the project to repair the Gura-Bicului Bridge, inspired by the Mission, and funded by the European Union, was completed in September 2001 and re-opened the main highway between Chişinău and Odessa. The Mission was able to locate support for installation of computerised connections and communications between the Moldovan Parliament and the Transnistrian Supreme Soviet, in support of ongoing efforts to harmonise legislation between the two sides." [8]

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Treatment of Asylum Seekers

6.45 According to the 2003 US State Department Country Report, "On July 25 [2002], Parliament adopted the Law on Refugee Status, which provides for the granting of refugee status or asylum to persons who meet the definition in the 1951 U.N. Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees or its 1967 Protocol. In practice, the Government provided protection against refoulement and granted refugee status and asylum. During the year, 87 persons requested asylum and 5 persons were granted asylum. According to the U.N. High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), 984 persons had been registered with the UNHCR in the country during the year through December 1. Many refugees originated in Chechnya, Iraq, Sudan, Afghanistan, Nigeria, and other African countries. The Government also provides temporary protection for some persons who do not qualify as refugees or asylees, but did not grant it to anyone who applied during the year. The Government cooperated with the UNHCR and other humanitarian organizations in assisting refugees and asylum seekers." [2a] (p9)

6.B Human Rights – Specific Groups

Ethnic Groups

6.46 The US State Department's 2003 Country Report on Human Rights Practices for Moldova notes that, "According to the 1989 census, approximately 65 percent of the population are members of the titular nationality. Ukrainians (14 percent) and Russians (13 percent) are the two largest minorities. A Christian Turkic minority, the Gagauz, representing approximately 3.5 percent of the population lives primarily in the southern regions of the country and speaks Russian and Gagauz, a Turkic language. Official statistics put the number of Romani at 11,600, or less than 0.5 percent of the population. The OSCE and Romani NGOs have estimated the number of Romani at 20,000 to 200,000." [2a] (p13)

6.47 The report also states that, "Russian, Ukrainian, Bulgarian, Gagauz, and Romani minorities were represented in Parliament, with deputies elected from nationwide party lists rather than local districts. Debates took place in either the Romanian or Russian language, with translation provided." [2a] (p11) The report goes on to state that, "A citizen has a legal right to choose the language of interaction with government officials or commercial entities and officials are required to know both Russian and Romanian 'to the degree necessary to fulfill their professional obligations.' Many Russian speakers, including well-educated professionals, do not speak Romanian well or at all, while most educated Romanian speakers know both languages. Representatives of Russian speakers argued for a delay in the law's implementation to permit more time to learn the language. In practice, Russian speakers were not subject to discrimination, and the law has not been used to deny them work as state officials. The Constitution provides parents with the right to choose the language of instruction for their children. In September, the Department for Interethnic Relations organized a minorities festival in a downtown Chisinau park in which dozens of minority NGOs participated and the Department and the Parliamentary Commission for Interethnic Relations sponsored a two-day seminar on the application of the European Framework Convention for the Protection of Minorities." [2a] (p13)

6.48 The OSCE reported in 2001 that, "Following visits by the OSCE High Commissioner on National Minorities to Moldova (HCNM), the Office of the OSCE HCNM and the Mission together established with the appropriate Moldovan authorities a pilot programme to train teachers of the State language as a second language for the four main areas in Moldova densely settled by persons belonging to national minorities. By the late summer of 2001, this programme had begun to turn out significant numbers of such teachers." [8]

6.49 During its 60th Session, held in March 2002, the United Nations Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination noted its concern about

reports of police violence against persons belonging to minority groups and in particular the Roma population. The Committee recommended that the Government take all necessary measures to prevent and punish excessive use of force by the members of the security forces against minorities. It also expressed concern about reports that minorities experienced discrimination in the areas of employment, housing, education and health care; it recommended that the Government undertake effective measures to eradicate practices of discrimination against minorities and, in particular, the Roma population. [3]

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Ethnic Ukrainians

6.50 According to the World Directory of Minorities (1997), "Although Ukrainian settlement of Moldova predates that by Russians, and Ukrainians outnumber Russians, Moldovan Ukrainians have been heavily 'Russified', especially in urban areas. Many speak Russian as their first language (37 percent)...Almost half of the Ukrainians in Moldova live within the area of the PMR." (Transnistria) [14] (p291)

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Ethnic Russians/Russian speakers

6.51 According to the World Directory of Minorities (1997), "The relatively small percentage of Russians in Moldova belies the influence of the Russian language and culture, which for almost two centuries played a leading role in Bessarabia and the Transdnierster region, especially following Soviet annexation. A Cyrillic script was introduced for the Moldovan language and Russian was taught in all schools...The centrality accorded to Russian ensured that a reactive ethno-linguistic nationalism developed among Russian speakers – a sociological category embracing Russians, Ukrainians, as well as Gagauz and Bulgarians, for whom Russian was important as a second language, and Russian speaking Moldovans, especially in the Transdnierster region." [14] (p291)

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Gagauzians

6.52 According to Europa - Eastern Europe, Russia and Central Asia 2004, a Christian Turkic minority, the Gagauz, mostly inhabit the southern districts of Moldova, especially the region around the town of Comrat (Komrat). [1] (p271) The 2003 US State Department Country Report on Human Rights Practices for Moldova notes that they enjoy local autonomy in the southern part of the country. [2a] (p10) According to the World Directory of Minorities (1997), "The Gagauz are either Christianised and Bulgarianised Turks or linguistically Turkicized Christian Bulgarians; they speak the north-western dialect of Turkish with many Slavic, particularly Bulgarian and lately Russian, additions...Some 73 percent of Gagauz consider Russian to be their second language, and most of the political elite are Russian-speakers." [14] (p292)

6.53 The US State Department's 2003 Country Report on Human Rights Practices for Moldova notes that, "In 2002, central authorities pressured the Gagauzia Governor Dmitry Croitor to resign, and there were irregularities in the October 2002 elections that replaced him with Communist candidate Gheorghe Tabunschik. Gagauz observers complained that the Government did not abide by the terms of the agreement giving Gagauzia autonomous status and that it enacted laws that contradicted both local and national legislation establishing Gagauzia's autonomy. Gagauz opposition figures argued that harassment continued in the May 25 mayoral races in the region. In November, two rounds of voting in Gagauzia generally met international standards, but were marked by irregularities including group voting, multiple voting, open voting, mobile ballot box fraud, proxy voting, and unauthorized persons in polling stations." [2a] (p10)

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Bulgarians

6.54 According to the World Directory of Minorities (1997), Bulgarians live in the rural south of Moldova; many assimilated to Russian culture and the remainder are highly Russified. The same source states that 79 percent of Moldovan Bulgarians claim Bulgarian as their first language and, since 1991, Bulgarian has become a language of instruction in schools situated in areas of compact Bulgarian settlement. [14] (pp292-293)

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Roma

6.55 The US State Department's 2003 Country Report on Human Rights Practices for Moldova notes that, "The European Roma Rights Center reported that law enforcement officials regularly subjected Roma to torture or other cruel, inhuman, or degrading treatment or punishment. Police and judicial officers rarely investigated or prosecuted violence and human rights abuses against Roma." [2a] (p2) The report continues, "Roma suffered violence, harassment, and discrimination. Local and international NGOs reported that Roma were victims of police beatings in custody, arbitrary arrest and detention, unlawful confiscation of personal property, and harassment by law enforcement officials and were subjected to societal violence and harassment. The European Roma Rights Center reported that officials discriminated against Roma with regard to equal treatment, adequate housing, education, and access to public services. A human rights NGO reported there were approximately ten cases of violence or harassment of Roma during the year, not all of which went to court...Roma were the poorest of the minority groups and often lived in segregated communities in unsanitary conditions lacking basic infrastructure. These conditions often led to segregated education with even fewer resources than in the rest of the country's schools. Many Romani children did not attend school, very few received a secondary or higher education, and there was no Romani-language education, unlike for other minorities." [2a] (p13)

6.56 According to the Moldovan Helsinki Committee for Human Rights (2001), Roma are not officially recognised as a national minority; they are concentrated in northern Moldova in several towns and in the central-western part of Moldova also in several towns. The total population is roughly estimated to be 100,000-200,000 people. In rural areas, the majority of Roma study in Moldovan schools and the Roma language exists only verbally. The Roma community does not have a printed media. [11] (p33)

6.57 The Moldovan Helsinki Committee made a fact-finding mission to a Roma community and recounted, in correspondence to the Canadian Immigration and Refugee Board dated 15 November 2002, that the tendency to hide one's Roma or Gypsy ethnicity to avoid discrimination still exists. [33g] In March 2002, the United Nations Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination noted its concern and recommended that the Government take all necessary measures to prevent and punish excessive use of force by members of the security forces against Roma. [3] Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty reported in June 2002 that Moldova's Roma minority lives in almost total poverty, with as many as 75 percent of the population jobless and only 23 percent of Romany children attending school. The same source reported that the National Minorities Department, within the Government's Education Ministry, believes that the economic situation is the main obstacle to improving the situation of the Roma and that short term-measures cannot be implemented due to this. [18f]

6.58 According to a report by Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty in June 2002, Juvlia Romani, a prominent Roma NGO, is involved in a Minority Rights Group International project called "Roma Influence on Policy and Practices in Localities in Central and Eastern Europe", or RIPPLE, which is underway in several eastern and southeastern European countries including Moldova. [18f] The website of Juvlia Romani stated in April 2004 that the two-year project aims to develop the knowledge and skills of national and regional networks of Roma to enable them to influence public opinion, policy and practice. [26] According to the report by Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty in June 2002, as part of the project Juvlia Romani conducted a study of Moldovan Roma. The study revealed that many Roma are leaving Moldova against a background of poverty and that 25 percent of Roma are currently working illegally abroad, many of them as seasonal crop workers in Western European countries. [18f]

6.59 In July 2002, the European Roma Rights Council (ERRC) alleged that Roma are subject to widespread discrimination in all spheres of public life, that they are subject to torture or to cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment by both state and non-state actors with law enforcement authorities systematically failing to provide effective protection to Roma. In addition, the ERRC claims that Roma are subject to arbitrary arrest and detention and are frequently not informed of the reasons of arrest or of any criminal charges they may face. Furthermore, they suffer discrimination in the judicial system and are under-represented in the administration, due among other factors to violations of their political rights. [27]

Women

6.60 The US State Department 2003 Country Report on Human Rights Practices for Moldova notes that, "Domestic violence against women was a problem. Although the Government did not keep data on incidences of domestic violence, human rights advocates asserted that it was widespread. The law does not specifically address domestic assault, and there is no law against spousal rape. Women abused by their husbands may file charges under general assault laws. Husbands convicted of such assault may receive prison sentences (typically up to 6 months). In practice, the Government rarely prosecuted domestic assault crimes. The Ministry of Internal Affairs reported 66 spousal abuse cases during the first 8 months of the year, including 36 resulting in serious bodily injury and 30 resulting in either murder or attempted murder. There were 135 cases of rape reported in the first 9 months of the year. Women's groups believed that the numbers of rapes and incidents of spousal abuse were underreported." [2a] (p12)

6.61 The Canadian Immigration and Refugee Board reported in September 2000 that, "Women victims of spousal abuse reportedly tend not to seek protection from the police or judicial system for two reasons: their feeling of shame; the expected reaction of the police who regard such spousal abuse as a minor crime." [33c]

6.62 The 2003 US State Department report goes on to say that, "The Government supported educational efforts, usually undertaken with foreign assistance, to increase public awareness of domestic violence and to train public and law enforcement officials in how to address the problem. In June, the city of Chisinau opened a women's shelter for victims of domestic violence. Private organizations operated services for abused spouses, including a hot line for battered women." [2a] (p12)

6.63 The report continues, "The law does not address sexual harassment. The law provides that women and men enjoy equal rights, and in practice women received pay equal to that of men for equal work; however, women did not hold high-paying jobs in the same proportion as men. The Government provided extended paid maternity leave. There were significant numbers of female managers in the public sector and in banking. The Minister of Finance and the president of the country's largest bank were women. Women made up approximately 50 percent of the workforce." [2a] (p12)

6.64 In its Final Report on the Parliamentary Elections of 25 February 2001, the OSCE – Office for Democratic and Human Rights stated that, "The Law on Political Parties provides that parties and socio-political organisations shall promote the principle of equality between women and men in decision-making organs at all levels. A 1997 initiative to introduce a provision in the election code requiring a minimum quota of 30 percent women on candidates' lists was not successful. Women made some progress in political representation in the 1998 elections when nine women gained seats in the 101-seat Parliament. The 2001 elections showed a slight improvement with a total of ten women

deputies elected. Women are well represented on many electoral commissions." [10a] (p10) Since 2001 [29b], the Speaker of Parliament has been Ms Eugenia Ostapciuc. [2a] (p11)

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Children

6.65 The US State Department's 2003 Country Report on Human Rights Practices for Moldova notes that, "There was no juvenile justice system. Children accused of crimes usually were tried by the criminal courts and, if convicted, sent to adult prisons where they were held in separate cells." [2a] (p2) The report states further that, "There is extensive legislation designed to protect children, and the Government provided supplementary payments for families with many children. Under the Constitution, the Government is to provide free, compulsory, and universal education for 9 to 10 years, which may be followed either by technical school or other further study; the requirement can vary at the discretion of the Minister of Education. However, many inadequately funded schools, particularly in rural areas, charged parents for school supplies...The health system devoted a large portion of its limited resources to childcare, but childcare professionals considered the amount inadequate. Various laws have provisions against child neglect; however, child abuse was believed to be widespread. Although prohibited by law, corporal punishment in schools was common...The situation of children in orphanages was generally very poor. Official statistics from 2001 indicated that there were approximately 13,500 institutionalized children. An additional 5,000 children lived in adoptive homes, 4,500 more lived in foster homes or with legal guardians. Not all institutionalized children were orphans; the number of children entrusted to the Government by needy parents or by parents leaving the country in search of work, reportedly was growing. NGOs estimated that up to 30,000 children were in institutions or foster homes. Due to lack of funding, children's institutions had major problems including inadequate food, 'warehousing' of children, lack of heat in the winter, and disease." [2a] (p12)

6.66 The report goes on to state that, "The Constitution prohibits forced or bonded labor, including by children; however, there reports (sic) that such practices occurred." [2a] (p14) The report continues, "The new Criminal Code, which entered into force in June, increases the level of child labor protection, containing provisions specifically regarding the worst forms of child labor. The new Labor Code took effect on October 1. The minimum age for unrestricted employment was 18 years. Persons between the ages of 16 and 18 were permitted to work under special conditions, including shorter workdays, no night shifts, and longer vacations. Children often were sent to work in the fields or to find other work, and those living in rural areas often assisted in the agricultural sector. The Ministry of Labor and Social Protection has primary responsibility for enforcing these protections but did not do so actively. The Ministry of Health also has a role. On June 14, ILO Convention 182 on the worst forms of child labor entered into force for the country. The new Criminal Code provides for 10 to 15 years imprisonment for involving children in the

worst forms of child labor, as defined in ILO Convention 182. In aggravated circumstances, punishment can amount to a life-term imprisonment." [2a] (p15)

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Homosexuals

6.67 The International Gays and Lesbian Association states that homosexuality was legalised in Moldova on 15 June 1995, when Parliament annulled Penal Code 106. [7] According to an interview, reproduced by the Canadian Immigration and Refugee Board, with the director of the gay and lesbian rights NGO, GenderDoc-M, published in the 29 November 2000 issue of the Windy City Times, the Voice of Chicago's Gay and Lesbian Community, "Sexual minorities are not protected". He also alleged that, despite being subjected to dismissals, beatings, blackmail etc, no case has been taken to the Moldovan courts because gay people are afraid to reveal their identities. [33d]

6.68 According to GenderDoc-M, from 1 October 2002, the age of consent for both homosexual and heterosexual behaviour was 14 years old, according to the new Penal Code, published on 13 September 2002 in the "Official Monitor of the Republic of Moldova". Article 174 of the new Penal Code says "Sexual acts, homosexual acts, lesbian acts and other sexual behaviour with a person, whose age is known to be less than 14 years old, will be deprived of liberty for up to five years." The changes in law were made following a lobby from GenderDoc-M. [31]

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6.C Human Rights – Other Issues

Organised Crime and Corruption

6.69 Freedom House noted in 2002 that, "Corruption remains common among state officials, officers in law enforcement agencies, and other public sector employees. A March 2001 report by the Center for Strategic Research and the local affiliate of Transparency International found that two-thirds of Moldovans are prepared to use 'unofficial ways' to get what they want when they go to public offices. The report, 'Corruption and Quality of Governance', also indicated that 63 percent of poll respondents explicitly said they would pay bribes in order to get what they needed from public officials." [17a] (p292) The Canadian Immigration and Refugee Board reported in June 2000 that in July 1999, the then Interior Minister announced that fifteen criminal cases had been opened against Interior Ministry officers, including three of high rank, and that in March 2000 an officer with the Department of Combating Organised Crime and Corruption was arrested in connection with a number of crimes. [33b] Freedom House (2002) concluded that, "Corruption is believed to be worst in customs, revenue services, public schools and health care, but graft is a problem in almost every part of the public sector." [17a] (p292)

6.70 According to a report by Transparency International – Moldova, cited by Freedom House in 2002, there were some 300 criminal groups in Moldova, most of which belonged to one of 35 criminal clans. One such group had a network of more than 1,200 members in almost every town and village. Freedom House also reported in 2002 that law enforcement institutions have had little success in fighting organised crime. [17a] (p293)

6.71 According to Transparency International (2001), a lack of state power has also resulted in increases in tax evasion, drug trafficking, illegal import/export operations and contract murders. [28a] (p111) However, the creation of the Centre Against Economic Crimes and Corruption in June 2002 has improved the government's record in combating fraud and corruption. A press release, reported by Transparency International – Moldova in January 2003, stated that the Centre had been investigating 180 cases of fraud and that it had imposed over 230 million Lei worth of fines and sanctions in its first six months of work. [28c]

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Treatment of Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs)

6.72 According to Freedom House, by mid-2001 there were about 2,500 NGOs registered although experts on Moldovan NGO activity believed that only about 15 to 20 percent of these were active. [17a] (p288) The US State Department reports that in 2003, "A number of domestic and international human rights groups generally operated without government restriction, investigating and publishing their findings, except in the Transnistrian region. The local Helsinki Watch organization maintained contacts with international human rights organizations, as did the Helsinki Citizens Assembly. Amnesty International maintained a satellite office in Chisinau and was active in the country, although the Transnistrian authorities impeded its activities in that region...The Government supported the work of the OSCE, which had a mission in the country to assist efforts to resolve the separatist conflict. The OSCE participated in the Joint Control Commission that reviews violations of the cease-fire agreement. Transnistrian authorities have limited OSCE access to the region; however, the OSCE mission enjoyed free access to the Security Zone dividing Transnistria from the rest of country...Transnistrian authorities reportedly have attempted to gain control over NGOs in the region by having security officials 'invite' their leaders to their offices to discuss their registration and by pressuring landlords not to renew office leases for some." [2a] (p11)

6.73 According to the Italian Consortium of Solidarity, in 2001 a main problem for NGOs within Moldova was a lack of self-sustainability. There were virtually no sponsors from the local business environment and a lack of useful relationships at both local and national levels with the authorities. [16] (p36) Freedom House reported in 2002 that NGOs were not exempt from Moldova's value-added tax although exemptions could be made if there was an

intergovernmental agreement on technical assistance and the Ministry of Finance made a favourable decision in this regard. [17a] (p288)

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Annexes

A. Chronology of Major Events

1991 - Moldova declares its independence. It joins the Commonwealth of Independent States, the successor to the Soviet Union.

1992 - Moldova becomes a member of the United Nations. An upsurge in fighting in the Transdniestr region leads to a state of emergency being re-imposed. Hundreds die in the fighting. Russian peacekeepers are deployed, after a ceasefire agreement.

1993 - The leu (plural 'lei') is introduced to replace the rouble.

1994 - A new constitution proclaims Moldova's neutrality, grants special autonomy status to Transdniestr and the Gagauz region, and declares Moldovan to be the official language.

1996 - Petru Lucinschi elected president.

1997 - Negotiations resumed with Transdniestr. Agreement is signed granting further autonomy and calling for more talks.

1998 - Elections see Communists emerging as biggest party, but a centrist, reform-minded coalition forms the government.

2000 - Moldovan parliament fails to agree on a successor to President Lucinschi. Parliament is dissolved and early elections are called for February 2001.

2001 February - The elections see the Communists under Vladimir Voronin win just over 50% of the vote. Voronin is elected president in April.

2001 April - Parliament dismisses the heads of the state radio and television stations in a move which critics say consolidates the Communists' hold on society.

2002 January - Announcement of plans to make Russian an official language and compulsory in schools sparks months of mass protests which end only when the scheme is shelved.

2002 July - Draft federalisation plan introduced, known as the Kiev draft. Agreed by OSCE and mediator states (Russia, Ukraine)

2002 December - New deadline for removal of arms/ammunition from Transnistria agreed at the OSCE Porto Ministerial. Russia to secure full withdrawal by end 2003.

2003 February - EU and US announce visa ban on Transnistrian leadership.

2003 February - Voronin invites Transnistrian authorities to join in writing a new Moldovan constitution that would create a common state in which Transnistria would be a federal unit.

2003 March - Legislation passed on reforming the regional administrative structure, reverting back to the Soviet era "rayons".

2003 March - Transnistrian Supreme Soviet formally recommended that all obstacles to the withdrawal of Russian military equipment and ammunition be lifted so the OSCE Istanbul and Porto decisions can be fulfilled.

2003 April - Moldova and Ukraine signed new customs agreement.

2003 May - Merger of three main opposition parties to form Alianta Moldova Noastra (MN).

2003 May - Local elections confirmed the ruling Communist Party's strong showing; they won just under 50% of votes countrywide.

2003 September - Moldovan Government created a new Department for European Integration.

2003 November/December - Elections to the People's Assembly were held in the autonomous Gagauz region in late November/early December 2003. The Communist party and those loyal to it won the majority of seats. [38] (p4)

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B. Political Organisations

Agrarian Democratic Party (DPP) (Partidul Democratic Agrar din Moldova)
Formed by moderates from both the Popular Front of Moldova and the Communist Party of Moldova; supports Moldovan independence, and economic and agricultural reform. Founded - 1991. Chairman – Anatol Popușoi.

Christian Democratic People's Party (CDPP) (Partidul Popular Creștin și Democrat)
Founded in 1989 as the Popular Front of Moldova, renamed in 1992, and as above in 1999; advocates Moldova's entry into the European Union and NATO. Founded – 1989. Leader – Iurie Roșca.

Congress of Intelligentsia (Congresul Intellectualitatii). Formed by former members of the Popular Front of Moldova; favours union with Romania. Founded – 1993.

Democratic Labour Party of Moldova Founded – 1993. President – Alexandru Arseni.

Democratic Party of Moldova (PMD) (Partidul Democrat din Moldova). Centrist party, formerly Movement for a Democratic and Prosperous Moldova, name changed in April 2000. Formed bloc with the Part of Progressive Forces in September 2001. Founded – 1997. Chairman – Dumitru Diacov.

Democratic Union Party Pro-European, concerned with social issues. Founded – 2001. Leader – Sergiu Mocianu

Ecological Movement of Moldova Founded – 1990. President – Alecu Renița.

Moldovan Centrist Union Splinter group of former Movement for a Democratic and Prosperous Moldova. Founded – 2000.

Moldovan Civic Party Centrist. Founded – 1997. Leader – Vladimir Slonari.

Moldovan Democratic Forum Formed by the merger of six right-wing parties: the National Liberal Party, the Moldovan Party of Democratic Forces, the National Peasants' Christian Democratic Party, the Party of Social Justice and Order, the New National Moldovan Party and the Party of Civil Dignity. Founded – 2001.

Moldova Noastra (Our Moldova). Formed as a result of a merger of the Braghis Alliance, the Liberal Party and the Alliance for Independent Moldova. Leader - Dimitru Braghis. Co –chairs – Serafim Urechean (Chișinău City Mayor) and Veaceslav Untila. Founded - 2003.

Moldovan Party of Communists (MPC) (Partidul Comunistilor din Republica Moldova) Formerly the Communist Party of Moldova, banned in 1991 but revived as above in 1994. First Secretary – Vladimir Voronin.

National Salvation Movement (NMS) Breakaway faction from the National Liberal Party. Founded – 2000.

Party of Democratic Forces Social-Liberalist party Founded – 1995 Chair - Valeriu Matei

Party of Revival and Conciliation (PRC) (Partidul Social-Democrat din Republica Moldova – PDSM). Formed by defectors from the Agrarian Democratic Party. Founded – 1995. Chairman – Mircea Snegur.

Party of Social Progress Founded – 1995. Chairman – Eugen Sobor

Party of Socialist Action Founded – 1996. Chairman – Aurel Cepoi.

Peasants' Party of Moldova Nationalist, moderate party.

Women's Christian Democratic League

Reform Party Centre-right party, which seeks to represent middle-class interests. Founded – 1993. Leader – Mihai Gimpu. Chairman – Ștefan Gorda.

Social Democratic Party of the Republic of Moldova (SDPM) (Partidul Social-Democrat din Republica Moldova – PSDM) Centrist-party advocating full Moldovan independence and rejecting any forms of extremism or violence. Founded – 1990. Acting Chairman – Oazu Nantoi.

Social Liberal Party Centre-right political party, based on the social liberalism doctrine. Founded – May 2001. Leader – Oleg Serebrian

Socialist Party (Partidul Socialist) Successor to the former Communist Party of Moldova; favours socialist economic and social policies, defends the rights of Russian and other minorities and advocates CIS membership. Leader – Veronica Abramciuc.

Yedinstvo (Unity) Movement Represents the interests of ethnic minorities in Moldova, claiming around 35,000 members. Founded – 1989. President – Petr Shornikov.

Parties and organisations in Transnistria include: the Union of Patriotic Forces (radical socialist; Leader – Vasili Yakovlev); the Movement for the Development of Dniestr (moderate); the United Council of Workers' Collectives (radical); 'For Accord and Stability' (moderate); and 'Position' (moderate; Leader – Svetlana Migulea); Russia's Unity – Yedinstvo established a branch in Tiraspol in 2000.

Parties and organisations in Gagauzia include: the Vatan (Motherland) Party (Leader – Andrei Cheshmeji) and Gagauz Halky (Gagauz People; Leader – Konstantin Taushandji).

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C. Prominent People

BRAGHIS Dumitru

Prime Minister from 20 December 1999 to March 2001. Leader of Moldova Noastra.

CUBREACOV Vlad

Deputy Chairman of the Christian Democratic Peoples Party (CDPP)

LUCINSCHI Petru

President of Moldova from December 1996 to March 2001.

ROȘCA Iurie

Leader of the Christian Democratic Peoples Party (CDPP)

SMIRNOV Igor

President of the 'Transnistrian Republic' from 1994 to present.

TARLEV Vasile

Prime Minister of Moldova from April 2002 to present.

VORONIN Vladimir

President of Moldova from April 2002 to present. First Secretary of the Moldovan Party of Communists.

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