

ROMANIA

HUMAN RIGHTS DEVELOPMENTS

Despite making progress toward European Union accession, Romania's human rights record in 2001 remained uneven. Rights groups continued to receive reports of excessive use of force by police. The state response to domestic violence against women and trafficking remained inadequate. No action was taken to remedy constitutional restrictions on free speech. Legislation designed to enhance minority rights was not implemented. Roma continued to experience discrimination in housing, education, medical care, employment, and access to goods and services. Legislative efforts to outlaw discrimination against gays and lesbians had mixed results. Romania came under pressure to improve arms export controls, but enforcement of existing laws continued to be a problem.

There were credible reports of excessive use of force and other misconduct by police officers, including against children. On March 14, fourteen-year-old Vasile Danut was detained and beaten severely by police in Vladesti. On April 5, police in Oradea reportedly attacked sixteen-year-old Ioana Silaghi, and also reportedly intimidated witnesses. Two police officers were accused of beating a suspect to death in Cugir in early July. The introduction of new guidelines on the use of firearms in June, intended to bring police practice into line with U.N. and Council of Europe standards, appeared to have had little effect. After September 11, Parliament suspended consideration of a draft bill curbing police powers to detain citizens for up to twenty-four hours without charge.

Legal protections for victims of domestic violence and trafficking remained inadequate. The Romanian Domestic Violence Victims' Assistance Center reported that a long, complicated procedure and probation system discouraged domestic violence victims from pressing charges against perpetrators. Despite the high level of trafficking through Romania, the Romanian government did little to address the problem.

Constitutional curbs on free expression remained in force in 2001 and were used by authorities to interfere with the work of journalists. Journalists also ran afoul of broad criminal defamation laws, under which prosecutions for slander of public officials could bring imprisonment or fines.

Romania continued to show a half-hearted commitment to the rights of national minorities. The National Minorities Council, meeting for the first time on July 10, 2001, criticized the legislation creating the council for failing to require the executive to consult with it on all legislation pertaining to national minorities. Access to media by national minorities remained limited.

Extremist nationalist parties fueled hostility toward national minorities. The November 2000 elections demonstrated the emerging popularity of the nationalist Greater Romania Party (Partidul România Mare, PRM), which captured one-third of the parliamentary seats. The party leader, Corneliu Vadim Tudor, who received

26 percent of the vote for president in the final round of elections, promised to destroy the “Gypsy mafia.” In August the Romanian Prosecutor-general’s office began an investigation into the publication of *The Nationalist*, a book that minority leaders said incited racial hatred and anti-Semitism. Although the PRM denied any connection to the book’s publication, it was written by a party deputy and endorsed by a top PRM aide.

The problem of discrimination against the Roma population—estimated to number as many as two million—continued to permeate society. A January 2001 European Roma Rights Center investigation found that violations of Roma rights were highly unlikely to be prosecuted, and authorities retaliated against complainants. Roma had their houses raided, and were detained, beaten, and threatened by private citizens and police. On February 1 and 9, 2001, police stopped trains headed for Brasov and detained, fingerprinted, and intimidated some one hundred Roma passengers, and warned them not to enter the city.

On April 25, the government published an ambitious plan for improving conditions for Roma, but Roma activists questioned its lack of detail on reaching the goals identified.

The government took steps to enact legal guarantees for gays and lesbians, but at the time of writing opposition from the Chamber of Deputies cast doubt as to whether sexual orientation would remain protected under pending antidiscrimination legislation.

Notwithstanding legislative efforts to decriminalize homosexuality and ensure the rights of gays and lesbians, gays and lesbians continued to face police harassment. In December 2000, Romanian citizen Adrian Georgescu was called to a police station without explanation. There he was questioned about his sexuality by police officers. After Georgescu publicized this event in January, a police officer admitted on Romanian television that Georgescu had been detained and questioned solely because of his sexual orientation.

A U.N. investigative panel determined in 2000 that Romania was a source of weapons illegally supplied to embargoed rebel forces in Angola from 1996 to 1999. It noted that reforms were needed in Romania to improve controls, as the weapons were authorized for sale to Burkina Faso and Togo on the basis of falsified documents. After taking the important step in mid-2000 of arresting and initiating the prosecution of a Romanian-Israeli arms dealer accused of illegal arms sales, Romanian authorities unexpectedly released him in February and he left the country for Israel. Romanian officials denied he was linked to the Angola case and said the prosecution would continue in his absence. Romania began a major push to export more weapons after sales slumped but said it would revise its arms export laws. Romania ratified the Mine Ban Treaty on November 30, 2000, and the treaty entered into force on May 1. It declared in June that it would destroy stockpiled antipersonnel landmines, which numbered just over one million.

DEFENDING HUMAN RIGHTS

Human Rights Watch received no reports of interference with the work of rights groups in 2001.

THE ROLE OF THE INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY

Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE)

Despite holding the chairmanship of the OSCE during 2001, Romania's penal and civil codes continued to violate the standards of free expression set by that body. Romania hosted the OSCE Conference on Roma and Sinti Affairs from September 10 to 13.

European Union

The European Parliament's report on Romania's application for E.U. accession welcomed Romania's intention to accelerate negotiations concerning membership but sharply criticized its lack of progress in meeting human rights standards, notably on the rights of children and minorities. The European Commission's 2001 regular report on Romania's progress toward accession recognized significant reforms since the 2000 report, but also urged continued progress, particularly toward implementation of the Roma strategy and antidiscrimination legislation.

United States

The U.S. State Department's first annual report on trafficking in persons categorized Romania as a "Tier-3" country, an indication that it had failed to make significant efforts to bring itself into compliance with minimum international standards. In May, the U.S. Agency for International Development awarded a grant to help fight domestic violence and child abuse in two counties in Romania.

RUSSIAN FEDERATION

HUMAN RIGHTS DEVELOPMENTS

The ongoing conflict in Chechnya and heated debates about press freedom dominated the year. Forced disappearances, torture, and extrajudicial executions by Russian forces were continuing hallmarks of the Chechnya conflict, while Chechen rebel fighters increasingly targeted for murder Chechen civilians seen as