



HARASSMENT OF CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANISATIONS HAS INTENSIFIED IN THE TRANSNISTRIAN REGION OF MOLDOVA

Statement by members of the Civic Solidarity Platform

28 April 2015

On April 17 2015, the *de facto* Security Committee (or the *KGB*) of the separatist Transnistrian region of Moldova issued a statement¹ describing civil society organisations which receive funds from abroad and are active on the territory of Transnistria as a threat to Transnistrian security. The statement focused particularly on the activities of the human rights organisation Promo-Lex and revealed that a criminal investigation had been opened by the *de-facto* Transnistrian authorities into what the *KGB* terms as the “direct threat to security” posed by Promo-Lex’s activities in Transnistria, allegedly aimed at “destabilising the situation in the region.”

Promo-Lex is a leading independent human rights NGO in Moldova which works across the country to promote legislative reform and defend human rights². It is highly regretful that the *de facto* authorities of the Transnistrian region interpret the organisation’s peaceful and legitimate advocacy and litigation activities as destabilising the situation. Promo-Lex works in partnership with Transnistrian NGOs to protect human rights in one of the most challenging areas in Europe, as Moldovan human rights NGOs are not allowed to carry out activities in the Transnistrian region, and local activists are not allowed by the *de-facto* separatist authorities of Transnistria to cooperate or communicate with NGOs based in other parts of the country.

Pressure on human rights defenders and civil society activists working in the Transnistrian region has intensified significantly since 2013. Numerous civil society representatives and journalists have been subjected to intimidation and have been the targets of libellous claims in retaliation for their work to promote and defend human rights³. Draft legislation and amendments to existing laws prepared by the *de facto* Transnistrian authorities in 2014 are believed to be part of a crackdown on NGOs. Among these legislative initiatives, a draft law on “foreign agents” was adopted by the *de facto* Transnistrian Parliament in November 2014 but has not yet come into force.

Ensuring effective protection of civil society work in Moldova is of utmost importance at this time, as increased pressure on NGOs operating in areas of frozen conflict such as Transnistria undermines efforts to monitor the human dimension and security situation and prevent human rights abuses.

Members of the Civic Solidarity Platform⁴ call on all international actors, inter-governmental organisations and political bodies to undertake active diplomatic efforts to ensure that human rights are respected in the Transnistrian region of Moldova and remind the *de facto* and *de jure* authorities of their obligation to respect international human rights norms, ensure the security of human rights defenders and safeguard and facilitate the right to freedom of association of NGOs, such as Promo-Lex, which are engaged in peaceful, legitimate, and lawful human rights activities in Moldova, including the Transnistrian region.

In particular, we call on the OSCE bodies and institutions, including the OSCE office in Moldova, to react to the recent human rights developments in the Transnistrian region in their role as mediators in the conflict, bearing in mind interconnection and interdependence between the security and the human dimensions.

Signed by the following members of the Civic Solidarity Platform:

All-Ukrainian Youth NGO “Foundation of Regional Initiatives”
Article 19, United Kingdom
Association of Ukrainian Human Rights Monitors on Law Enforcement
Barys Zvozkau Belarusian Human Rights House in exile in Vilnius
Belarusian Helsinki Committee
Bulgarian Helsinki Committee
Centre for Civil Liberties, Ukraine
Centre for the Development of Democracy and Human Rights, Russia
Freedom Files, Russia
Helsinki Citizen's Assembly – Vanadzor, Armenia
Helsinki Committee of Armenia
Helsinki Foundation for Human Rights, Poland
Human Rights Centre of Azerbaijan
Human Rights Group “Citizen. Army. Law”, Russia
Human Rights Monitoring Institute, Lithuania
Human Rights Movement “Bir Duino”, Kyrgyzstan
International Human Rights House Foundation HRHF
International Partnership for Human Rights, Belgium
Kazakhstan International Bureau for Human Rights and Rule of Law
Kharkiv Regional Foundation Public Alternative, Ukraine
Moscow Helsinki Group, Russia
Nota Bene, Tajikistan
Norwegian Helsinki Committee
Office of Civil Freedoms, Tajikistan
Public Verdict Foundation, Russia
Swiss Helsinki Committee

¹ See the statement at <http://www.kgb-pmr.com/news/370> (in Russian).

² "Promo-LEX" Association is a civil society organization with special consultative status with the UN whose purpose is to advance democracy in the Republic of Moldova through promoting and defending human rights and monitoring democratic processes. Promo-LEX works on the entire territory of Moldova, including the Transnistrian region. The Association closely follows the democratic process in Moldova and manages national and international missions to monitor electoral processes. Promo-LEX is a founding member of the Civic Solidarity Platform. For more information see the web site of the Association at <http://www.promolex.md>.

³ See, for example, Transnistria: Concern on the situation of human rights defenders, <https://www.fidh.org/International-Federation-for-Human-Rights/eastern-europe-central-asia/moldova/16642-transnistria-concern-on-the-situation-of-human-rights-defenders>, and Civil Rights Defenders urges the government of Transnistria to protect human rights, <http://www.civilrightsdefenders.org/news/civil-rights-defenders-urges-the-government-of-transnistria-to-protect-human-rights-in-an-open-letter/>.

⁴ The Civic Solidarity Platform is a network of more than 65 human rights NGOs from throughout the OSCE region, established in 2011. For more information about the Civic Solidarity Platform see the Platform's web site civicsolidarity.org.