LCRM – Legal Resources Centre from Moldova

Statement about the way seven Turkish citizens have been detained and have to be expelled from the Republic of Moldova

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Signatory organizations are concerned about the way seven Turkish citizens have been detained and have to be expelled from the Republic of Moldova. Expulsion of these persons to Turkey denotes an imminent danger to lives and security of these persons and the risk that they will not benefit a fair trial.

In a press release issued in the morning of 6 September 2018, the Information and Security Service (ISS) informed on carrying out of a complex national security threat prevention operation in several localities in the country. The actions have been carried out by the ISS Antiterrorist Centre. In another press release, the ISS confirmed the declaration by the competent bodies as undesirable of seven foreign citizens suspected of relations with an Islamist group, about which there are clues that it is carrying illegal actions in many countries, who will be expelled from the territory of the Republic of Moldova. The press release makes reference to the fact that the actions of these citizens have been subject to monitoring for a period of time and, once the existence of the risk to national security has been confirmed, it has been decided that these persons should immediately leave the territory of the Republic of Moldova. The ISS has collaborated in this case with special services of other states. Finally, the ISS came up with a specifying statement stating that the information which appeared in the public space was completely false, that none of the seven persons was a minor, that the persons were not detained, but had been already expelled from the country.

The information available in mass-media reveals that the detained citizens are nationals of Turkish origin, among whom are the Deputy Director of “Orizont” Lyceum and other employees of the “Orizont” Lyceum network. They were requested to present their identification documents and the reason for their arrest was not explained to them. Among the detained persons was a minor of 16 years, who was released in an hour. At 14:00 it was not clear whether these persons were on the territory of the Republic of Moldova or were extradited.

This is a second attempt by the state institutions to expel the administration of “Orizont” Lyceum. **In 2017 the Turkish authorities requested the closure of “Orizont” lyceums in the Republic of Moldova.** On 31 March 2018**, the director of the institution was detained and** heard regarding some circumstances that were subject of a criminal case. **The** director of the lyceum, Turgay ?EN, would have been suspected in a case that was started in November 2017 on the grounds of “terrorism financing”. The director of the lyceum has applied for asylum in the Republic of

Moldova. At the same time, he considers that the criminal case was opened at the order of the leaders of the Republic of Moldova in the interest of the Turkish leadership in response to the financing of repair works of the Presidency building in the sum of over 10 million Euro, fully ensured by the Turkish Government. Several schools from other countries have been subject to similar actions on the grounds that they would have been supported by Fethullah Gulen. The latter is a former ally of the Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan, who lives in exile in the United States since the late 1990s and is accused by the leadership of Turkey of being behind the attempted coup d'état on 15 July 2016. The clergyman is at the head of a vast network of NGOs and schools around the world and has opened several educational institutions over the past decades.

The signatory organizations condemn the fact that the persons are detained without explaining the reason for their detention. It seems that the intention of the Moldovan authorities is to expel the detained persons to Turkey right now. Given that the detained persons have been in the Republic of Moldova for a long time, their expeditious and unannounced expulsion is not justified and betrays hidden political interests. The detained persons can be expelled only to Turkey, where they are most likely to face an unfair trial and an imminent danger of being tortured. We request the Moldovan authorities to consider seriously the real danger to which they might subject these persons in case of their expulsion to Turkey, to act in the spirit of the law, to allow proper judicial control of the expulsion decision and to ensure that their decisions are not influenced by political interests.

Signatory organizations:

- Legal Resources Centre from Moldova,
- Promo-LEX Association

The English version of the statement is available here

The Romanian version of the statement is available here

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