



**people's
advocate**
OMBUDSMAN

ALTERNATIVE REPORT

**submitted by the People's Advocate Office of the
Republic of Moldova ("A" status NHRI) to the
United Nations Human Rights Council**

Universal Periodic Review - Forth Cycle

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July 2026



INTRODUCTION

1. Submitted by the People's Advocate Office (PAO), Moldova's NHRI, accredited with A-status by the SCA GANHRI.

I. National Human Rights Institution

2. The functional independence and security of tenure of the People's Advocate have been weakened by 2023 amendments. The legal framework also remains insufficiently aligned with the Paris Principles regarding immunity and protection from legal liability for actions undertaken in good faith.

3. Interference in the activity of the PAO persisted. In 2024 and 2025, senior officials sought to challenge and modify the institution's findings and recommendations, undermining its operational independence and effectiveness.

4. The PAO continues to face insufficient funding. Although its overall budget increased, a growing share was earmarked for capital expenditures (15% in 2025 and 43% in 2026), reducing operational resources for mandate implementation.

5. The PAO's expanded mandate¹ has not been matched by a corresponding increase in institutional capacity. Although the approved staffing structure increased from 65 to 72 posts, this remains insufficient to meet resource needs arising from expanded responsibilities. Furthermore, 24% of posts remain vacant and 7 positions remain unfunded, while salaries continue to lag behind comparable institutions.

RECOMMENDATION:

6. Ensure full compliance of the legal framework governing the PAO with the Paris Principles, strengthen safeguards against interference and legal liability for acts undertaken in good faith and provide adequate, sustainable financial and human resources commensurate with its mandate, including newly assigned functions.

II. Justice Reform

7. Justice reform continues through legislative and institutional measures, by external evaluation/vetting of judges and prosecutors, aimed at strengthening judicial independence and integrity. However, the process has contributed to a significant outflow of judges and prosecutors, while slow replacement has strained institutional capacity, affecting timely proceedings, effective enforcement of court judgments and confidence in the justice

¹ Whistleblower protection; legal entities; access to information; refugee rights; EU accession.



system. Access to justice is further hindered by unsynchronized territorial maps of courts, prosecution and police, creating geographical barriers, and by changes to state fees and court stamp duties that reduce affordability for persons with limited financial resources.

8. These shortcomings are reflected in a 29% increase in applications allocated to ECtHR in 2025 compared with 2024. The right to a fair trial is among the most frequently violated rights due to excessive length of proceedings and the delayed or non-enforcement of final judgments.²

9. Public perceptions of justice reform show gradual improvement, with 46% of respondents considering the right to a fair trial respected to a great/very great extent in 2025, compared with 36% in 2020.³ However, corruption remains the main structural challenge (57%).⁴

RECOMMENDATION:

10. Ensure effective implementation of the justice reform by reducing the length of judicial proceedings, strengthening the enforcement of final court judgments, promoting the use of alternative dispute resolution mechanisms, including mediation, and ensuring effective access to justice for persons in vulnerable situations.

III. Human Rights in the Transnistrian Region

11. The human rights situation in the Transnistrian region has further deteriorated. Individuals expressing dissenting views or considered disloyal to the de facto authorities face arbitrary detention, intimidation, reprisals, politically motivated prosecution, as well as threats to their life and physical integrity. Proceedings before de facto structures lack essential fair trial guarantees, including judicial independence, transparency and legal assistance.

12. Restricted PAO access, as an independent monitoring body, to the region, together with the non-functioning Human Rights Working Group, hinder monitoring and limit opportunities to address systemic violations.

13. Civic space continues to shrink. The application of the so-called “Information Security Doctrine”, along with censorship and intimidation practices, further restricts freedom of

² <https://www.echr.coe.int/documents/d/echr/annual-report-2025-eng>

³ PAO perception survey, 2026 (unpublished)

⁴ <https://ipre.md/2026/02/06/al-doilea-sondaj-national-de-opinie-publica-integritatea-in-sectorul-justitiei/?lang=en>



expression, access to information and public participation. PAO, journalists and human rights defenders still lack access to the region, limiting independent monitoring of violations.

14. Victims of human rights violations face significant obstacles in obtaining effective remedies from constitutional authorities. The so-called “Guretski Law” introduces criminal sanctions for submitting complaints to national courts and international human rights mechanisms.⁵ Despite successful interventions by the PAO, State authorities and international partners in individual cases,⁶ access to effective remedies remains dependent on ad hoc measures rather than established mechanisms.

15. Compulsory military registration and recruitment by the de facto authorities has intensified. Young persons, students attending Romanian-language schools and individuals who have already completed military service on the right bank of the Nistru River, are subject to mandatory military registration from the age of 16 and may face criminal prosecution and other sanctions for refusing military service.⁷ These practices raise serious concerns regarding liberty, security and physical and psychological integrity.

16. Romanian-language schools in the Transnistrian region face significant obstacles related to inadequate premises and infrastructure, restrictions and discriminatory financial measures.⁸ Limited access to preschool education and educational pathways aligned with the national curriculum undermines equal access to education and the preservation of their linguistic and cultural identity.

17. The 2024-2025 energy crisis disproportionately affected vulnerable groups in the region, limiting access to essential services. While response measures were taken, a systemic approach to future crises is needed.

RECOMMENDATION:

18. Strengthen independent human rights monitoring and protection mechanisms for the Transnistrian region, including by ensuring free, safe and systematic access for the PAO and other independent monitoring bodies to all places of deprivation of liberty, for the documentation of violations and assistance to victims.

IV. Prohibition of Torture

⁵ Penalties range from 5 to 8 years of imprisonment.

⁶ In 2024–2025, two persons were released after prolonged unlawful detention.

⁷ Including employment, travel restrictions and administrative barriers.

⁸ Refusal to return school premises, increased utility tariffs, movement restrictions and harassment of school communities.



19. Through monitoring visits to places of detention, the PAO and NPM continue to document longstanding legal and institutional gaps in preventing and combating torture, including the absence of a legal definition of inhuman and degrading treatment, inadequate safeguards for persons deprived of liberty and those subjected to involuntary psychiatric hospitalization, deficiencies in regulating the use of force and weak oversight. Limited resources further constrain the NPM's capacity to carry out its preventive mandate effectively.

20. Criminal investigations into alleged torture and ill-treatment remain disproportionately low, with few cases reaching court and most being discontinued or closed.⁹ The Prosecutor General's Office acknowledges significant underreporting and a substantial gap between official statistics and the actual scale of ill-treatment. Institutional instability and frequent reassignment of specialised prosecutors further weaken accountability.

21. Overcrowding and poor conditions of detention remain unresolved.¹⁰ Pre-trial detention facilities operate above capacity due to the extensive use of deprivation of liberty, including police detention (85% increase in 2025 compared with 2024),¹¹ frequent use of pre-trial detention, delays in criminal proceedings and limited application of alternative measures.

22. Efforts to combat criminal subculture remain insufficient, undermining the safety and dignity of detainees. LGBTI+ persons face heightened risks of abuse and inadequate safeguards in detention. Violence, self-harm and deaths in custody persist,¹² exacerbated by inadequate protection mechanisms and limited healthcare, particularly mental health care.

23. Incidents of death, suicides and violence in the armed forces raise concern, while restrictions on the Ombudsman's access to information hinder independent oversight and accountability.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

⁹ In 2025, prosecutors initiated 76 criminal cases and referred only 21 to court. Despite more than 2,000 reports on the use of force and bodily injuries, only 60 criminal investigations were opened.

¹⁰ As of 1 January 2026, the penitentiary system held 6,334 detainees, with P-13 Chişinău and P-11 Bălţi operating significantly above capacity (895 detainees for 570 places and 431 detainees for 258 places, respectively).

¹¹ <https://ombudsman.md/post-document/raport-anual-privind-respectarea-drepturilor-si-libertatilor-omului-in-republica-moldova-in-anul-2025/>

¹² In 2025, the penitentiary system recorded 1,789 bodily injuries, 221 cases of self-harm (94 severe) and 24–27 deaths.



24. Ensure prompt, impartial and effective investigations of torture and ill-treatment, strengthen legal safeguards for persons deprived of liberty, reduce excessive use of pre-trial detention, improve detention conditions and ensure access to adequate healthcare, including mental health services.

25. Strengthen independent oversight and accountability by ensuring the Ombudsman has timely and unrestricted access to all places of detention, including military facilities, relevant information on deaths, suicides and other serious incidents, and adequate resources to fulfill the NPM mandate effectively.

V. Civic Space

26. Recent legislative reforms¹³ strengthened the framework for freedom of expression and access to information. However, gaps persist in media ownership transparency, safeguards against media concentration, independent governance of regulators, procedural safeguards in sanctions and ensuring disinformation measures comply with freedom of expression.¹⁴

27. Human rights defenders, journalists and civil society actors face threats, intimidation, harassment and smear campaigns, including online. Ombudsman reports indicate increasing pressure on journalists in judicial proceedings.¹⁵ Despite PAO advocacy, no comprehensive protection framework exists. The Ministry of Justice's anti-SLAPP initiative¹⁶ remains limited to abusive litigation and does not address broader risks faced by human rights defenders.

28. The legislative consultation process is not consistently transparent or inclusive and often remains largely formal in practice, with draft decisions published without ensuring

¹³ The adoption of the Law on access to information, amendments to audiovisual and advertising legislation, measures addressing disinformation, the Media Subsidy Fund establishment and changes to appointment procedures for media governance bodies.

¹⁴ <https://www.coe.int/en/web/venice-commission/-/cdl-ad-2025-027-e>; <https://moldova.mom-gmr.org/en/findings/indicators/#political-control-over-media-outlets>; <https://ombudsman.md/avocatul-poporului-se-alatura-declaratiei-societatii-civile-cu-privire-la-noul-mecanism-juridic-de-suspendare-a-licentelor-furnizorilor-de-servicii-media-audiovizuale-si-cere-mai-multa-transparenta/>

¹⁵ <https://ombudsman.md/avocatul-poporului-condamna-intensificarea-intimidarilor-si-amenintarilor-asupra-reprezentantilor-mass-media/>

¹⁶ CRJM analysis (2019–2023): over 70% dismissed; over half filed by politicians/public officials; average duration over three years. /<https://crjm.org/libertatea-de-exprimare-a-mass-mediei-in-fata-justitiei-cum-combatem-procesele-judiciare-menite-sa-reduca-la-tacere-jurnalistii/23189/>



meaningful public participation or effective engagement of stakeholders, which affects the quality of decision-making.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

29. Strengthen the legal and institutional framework for freedom of expression and media pluralism by ensuring effective safeguards against media concentration, transparent and independent governance of media regulatory bodies and public service media, and that measures addressing disinformation fully respect freedom of expression.

30. Adopt a dedicated legal framework and protection mechanism for human rights defenders, separate from anti-SLAPP legislation, and strengthen safeguards for journalists, human rights defenders and civil society against threats, intimidation and SLAPPs, while ensuring meaningful and transparent public consultation in law-making.

VI. Equality and Non-Discrimination

Violence against Women

31. Violence against women remains widespread despite a strengthened legal and institutional framework, including the introduction of criminal sanctions for digital violence and harassment. In 2025, women accounted for 70% of victims of domestic violence-related crimes (960 cases)¹⁷ and 13 femicides were recorded.¹⁸ Women with disabilities, women in institutional settings, refugee women and girls face heightened risks of violence. A 2024 study found that persistent patriarchal attitudes and gender stereotypes continue to justify violence against women.¹⁹

32. Access to quality protection and support services remains limited, particularly in rural areas, with only one donor-funded regional service for victims of sexual violence operational.

LGBTI+ Persons

33. LGBTI+ persons remain among the least socially accepted groups, despite improvements in public attitudes, with the share of respondents considering their rights respected increasing from 14.6% in 2018 to 35% in 2025.²⁰ However, stigma remains

¹⁷ <https://politia.md/sites/default/files/media/documents/2026-03/34-1-346%20int.%2016.01.2026.pdf>

¹⁸ <https://mai.gov.md/index.php/en/news/authorities-strengthen-response-severe-forms-domestic-violence>

¹⁹ <https://moldova.unfpa.org/en/publications/images-study-%E2%80%93-2024-men-and-gender-equality-republic-moldova>

²⁰ PAO perception surveys, 2018/2021/2023/2025.



widespread, with 49% of respondents supporting punitive measures against LGBTI+ persons.²¹ Hate speech and hate-motivated incidents persist, particularly during electoral periods,²² while underreporting and challenges in identifying and investigating bias-motivated offences hinder effective protection.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

34. Strengthen efforts to prevent and combat gender-based violence by ensuring sustainable, nationwide access to specialized protection and support services, including for survivors of sexual violence, with particular attention to women in vulnerable situations.

35. Strengthen measures to prevent and effectively investigate hate speech and hate-motivated offences against LGBTI+ persons, encourage reporting and promote equality and non-discrimination through awareness-raising and professional training.

VII. Persons with Disabilities

36. Despite legislative guarantees, accessibility remains a systemic challenge. Persons with disabilities continue to face physical, communication and digital barriers in accessing buildings, transport and public services. The Ombudsman found shortcomings in reasonable accommodation, accessible information and sign language interpretation, limiting equal access to justice, public services and community participation. The establishment of an independent mechanism for monitoring the implementation of the CRPD remains pending.

37. Deinstitutionalisation has progressed slowly, with approximately 1,700 adults with disabilities placed in residential institutions. An assessment found that 33% of residents have low support needs and could live independently in the community.²³ However, limited community-based services, geographical coverage, local capacity and funding, fragmented coordination and reliance on the medical model of disability continue to impede independent living and effective deinstitutionalisation.

38. Persons with psychosocial disabilities in psychiatric hospitals and residential institutions remain exposed to serious human rights violations. The Ombudsman identified persistent shortcomings in safeguards against involuntary hospitalization and non-consensual psychiatric treatment, alongside systemic failures to prevent and respond to

²¹ https://egalitate.md/wp-content/uploads/2021/01/ENG_Study_Equality_Perceptions.pdf

²² https://promolex.md/wp-content/uploads/2025/08/report-2_promo-lex-2025_en.pdf

²³ <https://gov.md/sites/default/files/media/documents/sedinte-de-guvern/2026-05/484-MMPS-2026.pdf>



violence, sexual abuse, neglect, forced labour, trafficking and exploitation.²⁴ These concerns are reinforced by ECtHR findings on the authorities' failure to protect and investigate violence against a woman with an intellectual disability.²⁵

39. Persons with disabilities continue to face an inadequate standard of living and higher risk of poverty. In 2024, the poverty rate reached 46.7% among persons with disabilities compared to 32.3% among persons without disabilities, disproportionately affecting rural populations.²⁶ Social protection benefits do not cover basic needs, while disability pensions do not account for disability-related extra costs. Only 6.7% of households with persons with disabilities rated their standard of living as good/very good.²⁷

40. The employment rate of persons with disabilities is only 17.5%, compared with 46.2% for those without disabilities.²⁸

RECOMMENDATIONS:

41. Establish the independent monitoring mechanism under Article 33(2) of the CRPD and accelerate deinstitutionalisation by ensuring sustainable financing and nationwide availability of community-based support services, strengthening intersectoral coordination and continuity of support during the transition to community living.

42. Strengthen legal safeguards, independent oversight and accountability mechanisms to prevent involuntary hospitalization, non-consensual psychiatric treatment and all forms of violence, abuse and exploitation of persons with disabilities in psychiatric hospitals and residential institutions, ensuring effective investigations and access to remedies.

VIII. Right to an Adequate Standard of Living

43. Poverty remains high, reaching 31.1% in 2025, with marked disparities between rural (40.0%) and urban (21.1%) areas.²⁹ In 2024, the absolute poverty rate among rural children

²⁴ <https://ombudsman.md/post-document/raport-anual-privind-respectarea-drepturilor-si-libertatilor-omului-in-republica-moldova-in-anul-2025/>

²⁵ [https://hudoc.echr.coe.int/ukr#{%22itemid%22:\[%22001-241986%22\]}](https://hudoc.echr.coe.int/ukr#{%22itemid%22:[%22001-241986%22]})

²⁶ https://statbank.statistica.md/PxWeb/pxweb/en/30%20Statistica%20sociala/30%20Statistica%20sociala_04%20NIV_NIV070_NIV0710_NIV0710_2019-2024/NIV071150_2019-2024.px/table/tableViewLayout2/?rxid=b2ff27d7-0b96-43c9-934b-42e1a2a9a774

²⁷ https://statistica.gov.md/ro/persoanele-cu-dizabilitati-in-republica-moldova-in-anul-2024-9460_62109.html

²⁸ Ibidem

²⁹ https://statistica.gov.md/en/statistic_indicator_details/58



reached 46.6%, compared with 18.6% among urban children.³⁰ While social protection benefits have gradually increased, concerns remain regarding their adequacy. The subsistence minimum does not fully reflect the resources for an adequate standard of living or the additional costs faced by vulnerable groups.

RECOMMENDATION:

44. Review the methodology for calculating the subsistence minimum and strengthen the adequacy of social protection benefits to ensure they reflect the resources required for an adequate standard of living, including disability- and age-related additional costs and the needs of households with children, in line with persistent poverty levels and cost-of-living developments, particularly in rural areas.

IX. Rights of the Child

Right to Health

45. Children continue to face barriers in accessing essential healthcare. The mandatory health insurance scheme does not cover essential medicines and specialised nutritional products for children with rare diseases, leaving many families to bear unaffordable costs.³¹ Challenges persist in access to preventive healthcare, including declining vaccination coverage³² and increasing infant mortality,³³ particularly in rural areas.

46. Access to child and adolescent mental health care and psychosocial support remains limited. Shortages of specialised professionals, insufficient community-based services, limited early intervention mechanisms and persistent stigma continue to prevent many children from receiving timely and adequate support. Mental and behavioural disorders account for 46.3% of primary disability cases among children,³⁴ underscoring the need to

³⁰ Data do not cover the Transnistrian region, where conditions may be more severe.

https://statistica.gov.md/ro/situatia-copiilor-in-republica-moldova-in-anul-2024-9578_61802.html

³¹ <https://ombudsman.md/post-document/annual-report-on-the-observance-of-human-rights-and-freedoms-in-the-republic-of-moldova-in-2024-2/>

³² Under 90%, except BCG/

https://statbank.statistica.md/PxWeb/pxweb/en/30%20Statistica%20sociala/30%20Statistica%20sociala__08%20SAN__SAN030/SAN030100.px/table/tableViewLayout2/?rxid=b2ff27d7-0b96-43c9-934b-42e1a2a9a774

³³ 11.8 deaths per 1,000 live births in 2024 (8.5 in 2021)/

https://statbank.statistica.md/PxWeb/pxweb/en/20%20Populatia%20si%20procese%20demografice/20%20Populatia%20si%20procese%20demografice__POP040/POP041100.px/table/tableViewLayout2/?loadedQueryId=b2d7a539-3981-4aa8-9c5f-b18415fcfee2&timeType=from&timeValue=2017

³⁴ https://statistica.gov.md/files/files/publicatii_electronice/Copiii_Moldovei/Copii_Moldovei_2025.pdf



strengthen prevention, early intervention and coordinated support across the health, education and social sectors.

Children with Disabilities

47. Despite a comprehensive legal framework, children with disabilities face unequal access to essential support services. Community-based and specialized services are insufficient and unevenly available, while underfunding of the personal assistance service, long waiting lists and weak intersectoral coordination limit timely access to support. As a result, families bear care responsibilities, increasing their risk of poverty and social exclusion.

Protection of Children in Transnistrian Region

48. Children deprived of parental care are at heightened risk of trafficking, illegal adoption and other forms of exploitation due to the lack of effective child protection safeguards, oversight by Moldovan authorities, unrecognized “adoption” procedures and disclosure of children’s personal data.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

49. Ensure equitable access to healthcare for all children by covering essential medicines and specialised nutritional products for children with rare diseases, strengthening preventive healthcare measures, including vaccination programmes, and expanding child and adolescent mental health services through increased specialist capacity, community-based support and early intervention.

50. Strengthen community-based support for children with disabilities by increasing funding for personal assistance, reducing waiting time and improving intersectoral coordination to ensure timely access to services.

51. Ensure that all adoptions involving children from the Transnistrian region are carried out exclusively in accordance with the national legal framework and international standards, while strengthening measures to prevent trafficking, illegal adoption and the unlawful disclosure of children’s personal data.