



**Distinguished Prime-Minister of Romania Mr. Victor Ponta,
Distinguished Vice-Prime-Minister of Romania Mr. Liviu Dragnea,
Distinguished Minister of Labor Ms. Mariana Câmpeanu,
Distinguished Senator Ms. Rozalia Biro,
Chairperson of the Human Rights Committee of the Senate,
Distinguished Ombudsman Mr. Atanasiu Crișu,
Distinguished Mayor of District 2 Bucharest, Mr. Neculai Onțanu,**

The Center for Legal Resources (CLR), a Romanian human rights nongovernmental organization is herein urging you to pay a visit to the 57 young people with mental disabilities who are confined in “Gheorghe Șerban” Center of Bucharest’s District 2.

After receiving the information in early 2012 that these young people are tied to their beds and left to starve every day, CLR has tried since to see them, to make sure that their rights were being observed. However, we have constantly been denied access to this institution.

Consequently, we complained about the lack of compliance with the legislation in force including to the Court of First Instance of District 2. Prior to doing so, we reported it to Ms. Mariana Câmpeanu, the Minister of Labor and Mr. Neculai Onțanu, the Mayor of District 2. Images with the bad treatments applied to these 57 young people were broadcast on Sunday, May 19th, 2013, by a national television station and they were also disseminated online worldwide.

If you have not seen those images, here is what the life of the young people of “Gheorghe Șerban” Center looks like:

Each of the 57 young people waits his/her daily turn to be given food. There is only one orderly that feeds them all, in a very short period of time, three times a day. None of the 57 young people has a choice to decide where, how, with whom they should live, when and what to eat, when to go to bed and when to wake up. Somebody else makes this choice for them: the employees of the Center. Nobody gets out of this Center to go for a walk when the sun is shining outside. In the second part of 2012, two young women left this center, only to go to the Străulești Graveyard, after dying, in the 21st century, of pneumonia. For these young people, the walls of the Center make up a penitentiary they can only get away from if dead.

Depriving these 57 young people of their freedom is a practice that must stop as it is a severe human rights violation. Confining persons with disabilities is one of the most severe forms of deprivation of liberty. In Romania, 17,404 persons with disabilities are segregated in 336 residential centers, whereas only 2,064 persons are provided services in day centers (statistics provided by the Ministry of Labor, Family, Social Welfare and the Elderly).

Ministers, the number of 57 young people with disabilities, segregated goes hand in hand with the decreased interest to develop support services in the community: these people are being denied their choice of a different type of living, beside that of living confined and in isolation. The inhuman and degrading treatments applied to the young people in “Gheorghe Șerban” center resulted in a degradation of their development and decisions-making abilities.

This highlights once again why you, Prime-Minister, need to make sure, personally, that “Gheorghe Șerban” Center will be closed down and that young people will be provided services in the community.

At the same time, the Local Council for District 2 of Bucharest and the Government of Romania have the obligation to publicly demonstrate that they had taken the adequate measures to rehabilitate and care for young people with disabilities. The Romanian Ombudsman and the Human Rights Committee of the Senate of Romania have the obligation to demonstrate that they had taken the necessary steps to protect the rights of these young people.

If the current degradation of the health condition of these young people finds its justification in the lack of available resources, allow us to inform you that Romania is thus breaching the the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

Therefore, we are asking you to publicly present your commitment to close down “Gheorghe Șerban” Center and provide the required resources to rehabilitate the health condition of the 57 young people of the “Gheorghe Șerban” Center.

Prime-Minister, Ministers, Ombudsman and Senator chairperson of the Human Rights Committee, Mayor,

The young people with mental disabilities of this center expect to be treated as human beings. And to do so, it is a must to implement the adequate plan and to supply public apologies on behalf of the Romanian State for the treatment that they become subject to on a daily basis. Your visit at this center is a first message that you are truly interested in the fate of these young people.

Sincerely,

Georgiana Pascu

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About CLR involvement in safeguarding the rights of persons with mental disabilities who live in institutions:

On October 29th 2012, CLR reported the bad treatments applied to these young people to the Ministry of Labor and filed a civil complaint against the General Directorate for Social Welfare and Child Protection for District 2, as the latter had failed to comply with their obligation to allow CLR’s access to this center. In almost 10 years and after more than 200 unannounced visits to centers and hospitals, this is the first center where we had to ask the court to help us gain access. CLR has filed several complaints to the European Court for Human Rights for bad treatments applied to persons with mental disabilities in public social welfare and psychiatric institutions. On September 4th, 2013, the Great Chamber of the ECHR will hear the case of the young Valentin Câmpeanu vs. Romania.