

Brussels, 13 December, 2016

Mrs High Representative / Vice-President Federica Mogherini
High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs
and Security Policy

European Commission
Rue de la Loi 200
1049 Brussels
federica.mogherini@ec.europa.eu

Mr Commissioner Johannes Hahn
Commissioner for European Neighbourhood Policy
and Enlargement Negotiations

European Commission
Rue de la Loi 200
1049 Brussels
cab-hahn-contacts@ec.europa.eu

Dear Mrs High Representative / Vice-President,
Dear Mr Commissioner,

As Members of the European Parliament, we would like to bring your attention to the recent extremely worrying events around Ms Ana Ursachi and Mr Eduard Rudenco, prominent Moldovan lawyers and human rights defenders, which currently take place in the Republic of Moldova. Mr Rudenco and particularly Ms Ursachi have become recently victims of intimidating and defamatory campaign led by the Moldovan prosecutor's offices and media outlets, which are highly influenced and politicized by a Moldovan oligarch Mr Vlad Plahotniuc.

Ms Ursachi as a renowned lawyer and human rights activist dedicated herself to the professional defence of *inter alia* opponents and critics of Mr Plahotniuc and his proxies. Such politically motivated and sensitive criminal trials like these of a Moldovan-Ukrainian citizen - Mr Vyacheslav Platon-Kobalyev, a key witness in a criminal case against Mr Plahotniuc's embezzlement of \$1 billion dollars from Moldova's state budget (later illegally extradited from Ukraine to Moldova, where he is now unlawfully detained); or of a Moldovan citizen - Mr Sergiu Cibotari, a former employee of the Post of Moldova and a key witness in a criminal case against Mr Plahotniuc's allies smuggling activities within the state enterprise (initially detained for planning to present to the special parliamentary commission evidence); became reasons of the initiation of a criminal punitive trial against Mr Ursachi in mid-October 2016. The alleged accusations make the reference to twenty years ago events, claiming Ms Ursachi's affiliation to a criminal organization, to which she is totally alien. In addition, the media groups owned by Mr Plahotniuc launched a lynching campaign against Ms Ursachi, aimed at publicly criminalizing her and causing harm to her professional credibility. Due to the current situation Ms Ursachi is afraid of her and her family's safety in Moldova, as well as has to be represented by another lawyer - Mr Rudenco. Because of defense of Ms Ursachi and her clients, Mr Rudenco also has become a target of the campaign initiated and orchestrated by Mr Plahotniuc.

As Members of the European Parliament, we strongly condemn Mr Plahotniuc's abuse of, and political influence on the Moldovan state institutions like the prosecutor's offices, courts and media outlets, for politically motivated reprisals, which serve as an extensive tool of repression against his opponents and critics. We condemn the actions against lawyers, human rights defenders, civic activists or even independent prosecutors and judges who refused to participate in the politically motivated trials, as well as business representatives who support the democratic opposition and its anti-corruption activity, like for instance a judge Ms Domnica Manole from the Appellate Court in Chisinau and a businessman Mr Alexandru Machedon.

Therefore, we ask you to call on the Moldovan authorities to immediately stop the above mentioned illegal actions against Ms Ursachi, Mr Rudenco, Mr Manole, Mr Machedon and others, and remind that the human rights and democracy situation in Moldova and other states of the European Neighbourhood Policy is under the permanent scrutiny of the European Union and its institutions, including your offices and the European Parliament.

Ana Gomes MEP

Rebecca Harms MEP

Benedek Jávor MEP

Jaromír Štětina MEP