

# Reporters Without Borders

<http://www.rsf.org/romania-activewatch-mma-and-reporters-17-01-2012,41692.html>

Europe/Ex-USSR - Romania

## ActiveWatch - MMA and Reporters Without Borders condemn acts of violence during protests

17 January 2012

ActiveWatch – Media Monitoring Agency and Reporters without Borders condemn the acts of violence perpetrated against journalists by both policemen and protesters over the past four days. The two organizations also denounce basic human rights violations by the riot police, such as the right to free speech, the right to freedom of movement and the right to freedom of assembly

On 14 January, in Ploiesti (Prahova), protesters threatened, insulted and assaulted journalists and cameramen. During the same evening, protesters at the University Square in Bucharest threw stones against a cameraman for *Antena3* TV channel. Journalists of the Romanian public television were threatened and verbally abused and their car stoned by protesters in Bucharest.

On 15 January, at the same University Square in Bucharest,

- Reporter **Petre Nechita** and cameraman **Dragos Stoian** were violently assaulted by protesters;
- A protester hit *TVR* reporter **Adelin Petrisor**;
- Riot policemen hit and detained *DC News* editor **Lucian Negrea**;
- Several other cameramen and reporters were verbally abused and threatened by protesters.

At the same time, the police committed a series of abuses that violated fundamental rights such as freedom of speech, freedom of assembly and freedom of movement. Over the last four days, the riot police abusively detained people protesting at the University Square, assaulted citizens who were just filming incidents there without taking part in the protest, limited the freedom of movement of citizens from other cities trying to reach Bucharest to join the protest, imposed screening filters in public spaces, abusively checking people's IDs.

On 16 January around the University Square in Bucharest, 113 people were detained by riot police officers who estimated they "had the intention to block the traffic".

These serious abuses, associated with the disproportionate response of the law enforcement agencies against the protests that began peacefully on Friday and Saturday evenings, inflamed and radicalized groups of protesters, who rioted on Sunday evening in scenes of unprecedented violence over the past 20 years.

Our organizations would like to remind the law enforcement institutions that their main goal should be to provide a safe environment in which citizens can exercise their constitutional rights during a public gathering.

ActiveWatch and Reporters without Borders call on the law enforcement agencies to exercise the use of force against protesters with extreme caution and only as a last resort, in case of acts of violence and to provide protection of journalists and those who document the situation on the ground.

- We call for sanctions against policemen and protesters who attacked journalists and citizens who filmed, took pictures or documented the riots at the University Square, as well as those policemen who obstructed the free circulation of citizens trying to reach

Bucharest and its public areas.

- We recommend journalists to be fully prepared to cover events which may involve violent confrontations, to wear distinctive clothing in order to be easily identified by policemen and protesters.
- We ask journalists and citizens to notify to our organizations or other human rights organizations witnessed abuses or attacks.
- We also call on the protesters to respect the work of journalists who are professionally compelled to inform the public. Journalists can expose abuses by the law enforcement agencies. We remind protesters that they have the right to film and take pictures of everything that happens in public areas and we recommend them to make use of this right, especially when they have the opportunity to uncover abuses.

*(Picture: AFP/Getty Images)*

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