Universal Periodic Review of the Republic of Moldova

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JOINT STAKEHOLDER SUBMISSION

Promo-LEX Association and the **World Organisation Against Torture (OMCT)**

Submitting organizations

The **Promo-LEX Association** is a Moldovan human rights organization founded in 2002. It monitors places of deprivation of liberty, documents torture and ill-treatment on both banks of the Nistru river, and litigates before national courts and the European Court of Human Rights. Promo-LEX belongs to the OMCT SOS-Torture Network and served as the national partner for the Global Torture Index. Contact: *[contact details]*

The **World Organisation Against Torture (OMCT)**, based in Geneva, coordinates the SOS-Torture Network of over 200 organizations working against torture, ill-treatment and enforced disappearance. In June 2025 it launched the Global Torture Index, which assesses the risk of torture in 27 countries on the basis of locally collected data. Contact: *[contact details]*

I. Scope and sources

1. This submission reviews the record of the Republic of Moldova since its third review on 28 January 2022 in six areas: the investigation and prosecution of torture and ill-treatment; conditions of detention and informal prisoner hierarchies; medical care in custody; torture and ill-treatment in the Transnistrian region; the use of force by law enforcement and treatment at the State borders; and the right of victims to rehabilitation. It covers developments through June 2026.
2. The analysis rests on the annual activity reports of the Prosecutor General's Office for 2021 to 2025, the Council of Europe penal statistics (SPACE I 2024), the report of the European Committee for the Prevention of Torture (CPT) on its visit of 3 to 12 June 2025, published on 4 December 2025, the case law of the European Court of Human Rights, the March 2026 dialogue with the UN Human Rights Committee, the Global Torture Index 2025 and 2026, and the submitting organizations' own monitoring, carried out through visits to places of deprivation of liberty and the documentation of individual cases on both banks of the Nistru river.
3. The Global Torture Index 2025 and 2026 classifies Moldova as facing a moderate overall risk of torture and ill-treatment, while rating the risk under its impunity pillar as high in 2025 and considerable in 2026. It records that the State has allocated no specific budget to preventing or addressing torture and has never contributed to the United Nations Voluntary Fund for Victims of Torture.[1]

II. Follow-up to the third cycle

4. At the third review Moldova supported the recommendations contained in paragraphs 127.80 to 127.86 of the Working Group report, which called for stronger mechanisms to report and investigate torture and ill-treatment and for every complaint to receive a prompt, impartial and effective investigation. It also supported paragraph 127.87, by which Germany asked it to "adopt legislation to ensure remedies, access to justice and rehabilitation" for victims. It noted paragraph 127.94, on the independence of the torture prevention monitoring body, with reference to the Council for the Prevention of Torture established under Law No. 52/2014.[2] The Committee against Torture had earlier recommended amending Law No. 137/2016 to guarantee redress and creating an independent complaints mechanism.[3]
5. The submitting organizations assess these commitments as partially implemented. The share of complaints leading to a criminal investigation rose from 9 percent in 2021 to 25 percent in 2025,[8] a National Referral Mechanism for victims of crime was created, and Law No. 137/2016 was amended in July 2025.[31] Yet three out of four complaints are still closed without any

investigation, sanctioning practice remains lenient, the informal prison hierarchy has since been confirmed by the European Court as a structural problem, and access to rehabilitation remains tied to the victim's place in criminal proceedings.

6. The scale of the underlying problem is visible in Strasbourg. By 1 January 2026 the European Court of Human Rights had delivered 127 judgments finding 181 violations of Article 3 of the Convention by Moldova.[4] In 2025 alone it decided 48 Moldovan cases and found at least one violation in 45 of them.[5] In March 2026 the UN Human Rights Committee welcomed the electronic register of bodily injuries, the appointment of designated prosecutors and amendments permitting ex officio prosecution of violence in detention, while pointing to persistent underreporting, a reluctance to classify acts as torture rather than lesser offences, and the prevalence of suspended sentences and fines.[6] That same year, Promo-LEX and the European Prison Litigation Network registered with the Committee the first individual communication against Moldova for failure to provide rehabilitation to a torture survivor, in the case of Alexandr Dimov.[7]

III. Investigation and prosecution of torture and ill-treatment

7. Official prosecution statistics for the reporting period are set out in Table 1.[8]

Table 1. Complaints and investigations of torture and ill-treatment, 2021 to 2025

Year	Complaints	Investigations opened	Share investigated	Sent to court
2021	511	46	9%	21
2022	485	69	14%	15
2023	397	79	19.9%	n/a
2024	319	83	26%	n/a
2025	299	76	25%	n/a

8. The fall in complaints, from 511 in 2021 to 299 in 2025, is not proof of better prevention. Against persistently low investigation rates it may reflect fear of reprisals and a settled public perception that official legal complaint mechanisms change nothing. The 2021 figures continued a longer pattern: in 2020, investigations were opened in 47 of 563 complaints, or 8.3 percent.[9] Disaggregated data confirm the trend. Registered cases of inhuman or degrading treatment under article 166[1], paragraphs 1 and 2, of the Criminal Code fell from 373 in 2023 to 306 in 2024 and 278 in 2025, while registered torture cases under paragraphs 3 and 4 rose from 4 to 7 and then 10. In 2025 prosecutors opened investigations in 72 cases of inhuman or degrading treatment and in 3 torture cases.[10]
9. The submitting organizations acknowledge the steady rise in the opening rate and the workload carried by the small group of specialized anti-torture prosecutors. The aggregate picture nonetheless remains that of an office which screens out three of every four complaints at the threshold, without published criteria and without external review of refusals.

10. Proceedings that do go forward last too long. Research by the Legal Resources Centre from Moldova on 71 final Supreme Court judgments in torture and ill-treatment cases delivered between 2013 and 2022 found an average duration of about six years across all instances, against roughly one and a half years in ordinary criminal cases; in several cases the limitation period expired before sentence. Across the same 2013 to 2022 body of judgments, the acquittal rate was thirteen times higher than in other criminal cases, and in only one case was the official under investigation suspended from office. That single suspension is known only from the case-file review; the authorities themselves publish no statistics on suspensions of officials under investigation.[11]

Table 2. First instance judgments in torture and ill-treatment cases, 2021 to 2024

Year	Judgments	Accused	Effective imprisonment	Suspended	Fine	Acquittals
2021	34	53	5	24	3	11
2022	28	37	2	14	7	5
2023	25	28	3	13	1	9
2024	14	18	3	6	1	8

11. Sentencing practice undercuts deterrence. In 2024 only 3 of 18 accused received effective prison terms and 8 were acquitted. The number of judgments fell from 34 in 2021 to 14 in 2024 even as more investigations were opened, which raises questions about how many of those investigations are ever completed. In *Valeriu and Nicolae Roşca v. Moldova* the Court warned that suspended sentences in torture cases may fail to secure accountability.[12]
12. Impunity for the police violence of April 2009 remains the clearest illustration. Prosecutors eventually opened 71 criminal investigations into those events; convictions were few and mostly symbolic: three officers received suspended sentences and one was fined. In *Boboc and Others v. the Republic of Moldova* (no. 44592/16, 7 June 2022) the Court found violations of Article 2 in both its substantive and procedural limbs over the death of protester Valeriu Boboc.[13] Ion Perju, the only officer convicted for that death, was sentenced in 2015 to ten years in prison, absconded before the verdict and was arrested only on 16 September 2025.[14] Seventeen years after the events, the main case file, no. 2009038033, which groups several interconnected cases, remains under active investigation by the Prosecutor's Office for Combating Organized Crime and Special Causes.

IV. Conditions of detention and informal prisoner hierarchies

13. Moldova holds one of the highest incarceration rates among Council of Europe member states: 235 inmates per 100,000 inhabitants as of 31 January 2024, the fourth highest after Türkiye, Azerbaijan and Georgia, against a European median of 105. The average length of imprisonment, an indicator that covers remand and sentenced prisoners alike, is 25.6 months, among the longest in Europe and more than twice the continental average.[15] The Global

Torture Index records 5,183 persons deprived of liberty as of 1 October 2024, of whom 8.1 percent were held on remand.[1]

14. In its report on the June 2025 ad hoc visit to Prisons No. 6 (Soroca), No. 15 (Cricova) and No. 2 (Lipcani), the CPT found that inter-prisoner violence, intimidation and the degrading treatment of detainees at the bottom of the informal hierarchy remain widespread, sustained by an atmosphere of fear, by a chronic shortage of custodial staff and by what the Committee described as the de facto relinquishment of authority and control over the prison population to informal prison leaders.[16] At Cricova the Committee recorded an incident it described as without precedent in its practice: informal leaders pressured members of the delegation, intimidated other prisoners into refusing interviews and would not leave rooms set aside for confidential conversations, invoking what they called their own prison rules. Prison personnel present did not intervene. The same visit documented the contrast between dilapidated, overcrowded accommodation for the majority and the spacious multi-room quarters occupied by informal leaders, and called on the authorities to guarantee at least 4 m² of living space per prisoner in multi-occupancy cells.[17]
15. Detainees labelled as outcasts are subjected to constant humiliation, exclusion from common prison life and forced cleaning duties. In *Petrov v. the Republic of Moldova* (no. 38066/18, 5 March 2026) the Court found violations of Articles 3, 4 and 14 of the Convention, held that the authorities had long been aware of the hierarchy and its discriminatory effects yet adopted no protective measures, and stated that the problem is structural and calls for general measures.[18]
16. The protection regime under Article 206 of the Execution Code functions in practice as isolation. Prisoners who request protection from hierarchy violence lose access to outdoor exercise, education, work and ordinary social contact, and spend most of the day locked in their cells. Prison personnel told the CPT they could not guarantee the safety of such prisoners within the general population.[16]
17. Healthcare in custody engages the same provisions. In *Cosovan v. Moldova* (no. 13472/18, 22 March 2022) the Court found a violation of Article 3 over the treatment of a prisoner with cirrhosis and drew attention to the lack of independence of prison doctors and its deterrent effect on proper certification.[19] The consequences now reach beyond Strasbourg: in August 2025 Westminster Magistrates' Court in London refused extradition to Moldova, citing systemic problems in its prisons and earlier judicial findings that Moldovan assurances on inter-prisoner violence could not be relied on.[20]
18. Some movement deserves recognition. The CPT recorded no allegations of physical ill-treatment by staff in the three prisons visited. The authorities adopted the SAFE Roadmap to Europeanisation of Moldovan Prisons, a plan for bringing the prison estate up to European standards, concluded an agreement with UNOPS for a new prison in Chișinău financed in part through a Council of Europe Development Bank loan, improved prison food and tightened the

recording of injuries.[17] The CPT has scheduled a periodic visit to Moldova in 2026, which will allow these undertakings to be measured against practice.[21]

V. Medical care and documentation of injuries

19. The People's Advocate confirmed in 2022 that medical staff working in detention facilities do not visit detainees regularly, so injuries are documented only when the detainee asks or the administration notifies the doctor, and that complaints of psychological torture are neither registered nor investigated.[22] Unified forms for recording physical injuries exist: a 2013 joint decision of the Prosecutor General's Office sets the procedure for identifying, registering and reporting allegations of torture and inhuman or degrading treatment,[25] and injuries recorded in detention are entered in the electronic register of bodily injuries.[6] The CPT has long pointed to the conflict of interest created by the subordination of medical staff to facility management and has recommended transferring health personnel in police detention to the Ministry of Health. The Government undertook to do so as early as 2007. The transfer has not happened.[16]
20. The UN Human Rights Committee welcomed the electronic register of bodily injuries in March 2026, while raising six cases of ill-treatment recorded in psychiatric institutions in 2024 and the October 2022 incident at the Codru psychiatric hospital involving a special police brigade.[6]

VI. The Transnistrian region

21. Torture remains in active use in the Transnistrian region, in detention facilities, including during interrogation. The 2024 United States country report records denial of medical assistance, the holding of defendants in metal cages during hearings and prolonged solitary confinement, and notes that no mechanism exists to investigate acts of torture by the de facto security structures.[23] Promo-LEX documentation shows that people from both banks of the river are detained for political reasons, for refusing conscription, for opposing Russia's aggression against Ukraine or on fabricated drug charges, and describes beatings, starvation rations, forced administration of psychotropic substances and threats against relatives.
22. The Dimov case illustrates both limbs of the problem. Alexandr Dimov was seized in May 2022 by the Tiraspol security apparatus, held until February 2025 and tortured. The communication filed on his behalf engages the responsibility of the Russian Federation under the Covenant and, for the first time, that of Moldova for failing to provide him any rehabilitation, medical or psychological care or reintegration support after release.[7] Under their positive obligations, the constitutional authorities must keep using every legal and diplomatic avenue open to them, document violations in the region and support victims regardless of whether the direct perpetrators can ever be prosecuted.

VII. Use of force by law enforcement and treatment at the State borders

23. A large share of reported cases of ill-treatment occurs outside detention, in public spaces, at the first point of contact with police, carabinieri or border police officers.[24] Within the prison system, the National Preventive Mechanism reported that physical force was used in 279 cases in 2022, down from 475 in 2021, and special means, including tear gas, in 253 cases, down from 389.
24. After the killing of Izzet Eren in Chişinău on 10 July 2024, Parliament amended the asylum and extradition rules. The law in force since 15 August 2024 raised the ceiling on detention pending extradition from 180 days to twelve months, created a fast-track procedure for asylum claims lodged by persons facing extradition and confined appeals to the Court of Appeal.[26] Given this, doubled custody ceilings and compressed review demand strict necessity testing, genuine judicial control and absolute respect for non-refoulement, the risk of which remains real for asylum seekers from outside Ukraine.
25. Since 12 October 2025 the EU Entry/Exit System has registered the biometric data of Moldovan citizens at the Union's external borders, and Moldova's own Border Police are aligning their systems with Schengen requirements under a dedicated EU project launched in June 2025.[27] As border management hardens on both sides, human rights safeguards must be written into procedure rather than assumed. One existing safeguard deserves to be kept and noticed: Moldova is the only country covered by the Global Torture Index whose prohibition on detaining migrant children is comprehensive and extends to their parents or caregivers.[28]

VIII. The right to rehabilitation

26. Rehabilitation of victims of crime is governed by Law No. 137/2016, which provides for informational and psychological counseling, legal aid and financial compensation under the Ministry of Labour and Social Protection.[29] Since the last review the Government has approved the National Referral Mechanism for victims of crime for 2022 to 2026[30] and, in July 2025, Parliament amended the Law. The notion of victim was widened, the documents conferring victim status were regulated in article 21, compensation procedures were simplified and an advance payment was introduced for urgent situations.[31]
27. These steps still fail torture survivors on three counts. Access to long-term services remains conditional on procedural status. The applicant must show a complaint or participation in proceedings, and urgent assistance is capped at 45 days with a single 15-day extension. Recovery from torture takes months or years, and tying it to a process that closes three quarters of complaints at the door excludes exactly the people the justice system has already failed. Article 14 of the Convention against Torture, as read by the Committee in its General Comment No. 3, requires that rehabilitation not depend on the identification, prosecution or conviction of the perpetrator, nor on the victim's capacity to lodge or sustain a complaint.[33]
28. The Law also treats torture survivors as ordinary crime victims, with no distinct category and no trauma-informed pathway, although the gravity and duration of the harm set them apart.

And article 5, paragraph 3, bars State budget funding for services that non-commercial organizations extend beyond the categories defined by the State. The Rehabilitation Centre for Torture Victims "Memoria", the only specialized provider in the country, assisted 235 survivors in 2021, 122 in 2022, 129 in 2023, 193 in 2024 and 140 in 2025, working entirely on foreign funding while State institutions rely on it for services and training.[34]

29. Implementation of the National Preventive Mechanism's own recommendations tells the same story: about 60 percent of medium-term recommendations are acted on, against 10 to 15 percent of long-term ones, those that require money or policy change.[25]

IX. Transparency and cooperation

30. The Global Torture Index rates Moldova's access to torture-related information as circumscribed, and basic accountability data, such as suspensions from office of officials under investigation, are simply not collected.[1] In its 2025 report the European Commission found that civil society operates in an enabling environment while pressing for more transparent decision-making, and asked Moldova to improve detention conditions, execute the relevant judgments of the European Court and act on all recommendations of the CPT, including on medical care for detainees.[35] The accession process under Cluster 1 gives these obligations enforcement weight that the UPR alone cannot supply; the two tracks should be read together.

X. Recommendations

31. The submitting organizations recommend that the Republic of Moldova:

* Open a criminal investigation, conducted in line with the Istanbul Protocol, into every complaint of torture or ill-treatment that is not manifestly unfounded, publish the criteria applied at the screening stage and subject refusals to independent review;
* Impose criminal penalties in torture and ill-treatment cases that are effective, proportionate and dissuasive, including custodial sentences commensurate with the gravity of the acts, and end the routine recourse to suspended sentences;
* Suspend from active duty officials under criminal investigation for torture or ill-treatment until proceedings conclude, and publish annual statistics on such suspensions;
* Execute the judgments of the European Court of Human Rights concerning Article 3 through a time-bound action plan submitted to the Committee of Ministers;
* Complete the investigation and adjudication of the remaining April 2009 cases before limitation periods expire, and report publicly on their status;
* Adopt a dated plan to dismantle the informal prisoner hierarchy, combining adequate staffing, risk-based allocation on admission, the phasing out of large dormitories and disciplinary accountability for staff who tolerate informal power structures;

* Reform the application of Article 206 of the Execution Code so that prisoners seeking protection retain access to exercise, education, work and social contact;
* Implement the SAFE Roadmap to Europeanisation of Moldovan Prisons with annual public progress reports, open the new Chișinău prison and guarantee at least 4 m² of living space per prisoner in shared cells;
* Reduce the prison population and the share of remand detention through wider use of non-custodial measures, consistent with the Tokyo Rules and, for women, the Bangkok Rules;
* Transfer medical personnel serving police detention facilities to the Ministry of Health by the end of 2027, as promised in 2007;
* Guarantee prompt and confidential medical examination of every person deprived of liberty, with mandatory documentation of physical and psychological injuries, and register and investigate complaints of psychological torture;
* Use all legal and diplomatic means available to protect persons in the Transnistrian region from torture, document violations there and press for access by independent monitors;
* Grant victims of torture from the Transnistrian region full access to rehabilitation and support services irrespective of whether the perpetrators can be prosecuted;
* Investigate effectively every allegation of ill-treatment during police interventions in public spaces and at borders, and publish annual use-of-force data;
* Review the twelve-month ceiling on detention pending extradition and the fast-track asylum procedure against the requirements of necessity, proportionality, judicial review and non-refoulement;
* Amend article 21 of Law No. 137/2016 so that torture survivors receive long-term rehabilitation regardless of whether they have filed a complaint or take part in criminal proceedings;
* Recognize victims of torture and ill-treatment in Law No. 137/2016 as a distinct category entitled to specialized, trauma-informed services;
* Amend article 5, paragraph 3, of Law No. 137/2016 to permit State funding of specialized non-governmental rehabilitation providers, and allocate a dedicated budget for torture prevention and victim assistance;
* Contribute annually to the United Nations Voluntary Fund for Victims of Torture;
* Publish disaggregated data on complaints, investigations, prosecutions and sanctions for torture and ill-treatment, carry anti-torture benchmarks into the monitoring of Cluster 1 of the EU accession process, and report publicly each year on the implementation of the National Preventive Mechanism's recommendations.

Endnotes

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