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Freedom in the World

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Moldova

Polity: Presidential-parliamentary democracy

Political Rights: 2

Civil Liberties: 4

Status: Partly Free

Economy: Mixed capitalist (transitional)

Population: 4,300,000

PPP: \$1,500

Life Expectancy: 67

Ethnic Groups: Moldovan/Romanian (64.5 percent), Ukrainian (14 percent), Russian (13 percent), Gagauz (3.5 percent), Bulgarian (2 percent), Jewish (1.5 percent), other (1.5 percent)

Capital: Chisinau

Overview

Key issues during 1999 were ongoing negotiations about the status of the Transdniestrian region and continued economic and political instability.

Moldova, a predominantly Romanian-speaking former Soviet republic bordering Ukraine and Romania, declared independence from the Soviet Union in 1991. In 1990, in response to increasing calls from Romanian-speaking Moldovans for unification with Romania, Russian-speaking Slavs in the Transdniestrian region proclaimed the Dniester Moldovan Republic (DMR). This was followed by the secession of the 150,000 member Gagauz, a Turkic Christian minority. The secessionists were backed by the Russian 14th Army stationed in the DMR, and a violent conflict, ended in mid-1992, has led to a stalemate since. Support for unification with Romania has since fallen to only 5 percent while 83 percent back continued state independence.

In the 1994 parliamentary elections, the Agrarian PDAM—a coalition of former Communists and moderate supporters of Moldovan statehood—won 56 of 104 seats. In 1996, Petru Lucinschi, who ran as an independent, was elected president. Ion Ciubuc was approved as prime minister by parliament in January 1997. To consolidate their activities, pro-Lucinschi forces formed the Movement for a Democratic and Prosperous Moldova.

In March 1998, capitalizing on growing popular discontent with continued economic problems, the Communists won the parliamentary elections, gaining 30 percent of the vote and 40 seats. The nationalist Democratic Convention won 19 percent and 26 seats; the Movement for a Democratic and Prosperous Moldova, 18 percent and 24 seats; and the center-right Party of

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