



European
Federation of
Journalists



22 February 2013

*To: Traian Băsescu, The President of Romania
Victor Ponta, Prime Minister
Crin Antonescu, President of the Romanian Senate
Valeriu Zgonea, President of the Deputy Chamber of the Romanian Parliament*

Re: abuses at National Press Agency

Your Excellencies,

We write to you on behalf of the International Federation of Journalists (IFJ) and its regional group, the European Federation of Journalists (EFJ), to reaffirm our concern that your authorities have so far failed to act to stop the abuses by management at the National Press Agency AGERPRES (NPA AGERPRES) against its own employees and against the Professional Journalists' Union, in breach of the Collective Labour Agreement. We support our affiliate member, RFJ MediaSind, in their effort to defend journalists' freedom of expression and freedom of association, and to ensure that all aspects of the Agreement are respected.

In a letter sent on 19 September 2011 to the President, Prime Minister and Presidents of both parliamentary chambers, the European Federation of Journalists expressed its concern over similar abuses against staff at this public press agency and asked for the setting up of a Parliamentary Commission to investigate the unlawfulness of the General Manager's actions which may be in breach of his mandate, the fraudulent management of public funds, the accusations of censorship and the non-compliance both of the mass media and AGERPRES Collective Labour Agreements.

We also described in that letter how the General Manager of the Agency harassed union members and interfered in editorial policy by adopting an Internal Regulation which, authoritatively, imposed exclusively his conditions. In fact, there is ample evidence to show



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that the NPA AGERPRES is trying to eliminate democratic union representation in the institution.

After desperate and illegal attempts to evict the union from the Agency building, to take away noticeboards used by the union to communicate with staff, to force some of them to drop the lawsuit introduced by the union to recover the 25% illegal cuts in wages and to impose on the employees the cost of phone calls due to discretionary contracts concluded with several phone companies, the Interim General Manager has blocked access to the office of the Professional Journalists' Union at its headquarters inside the Press House. This is in breach of the Collective Labour Agreement, in force until 16 February 2014, which compels the employer to provide facilities inside the agency for union activities and meetings.

Impeding union organisation in a workplace is considered to be a crime according to Romanian law, and we consider that, in this case, European and International standards on social dialogue have been seriously violated.

EFJ and IFJ support the protests made by RFJ MediaSind to the European Commission and to the ILO, and urge the Romanian authorities to comply with ILO Conventions and European Directives in the field of labour relations and ensure that the law is strictly adhered to throughout public press institutions in Romania.

Respectfully,

Jim Boumelha
IFJ President

Arne König
EFJ President