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Monitoring Report

The Human Rights Situation in the Transnistrian Region of the Republic of Moldova

Monitoring period: 1 January – 31 March 2026



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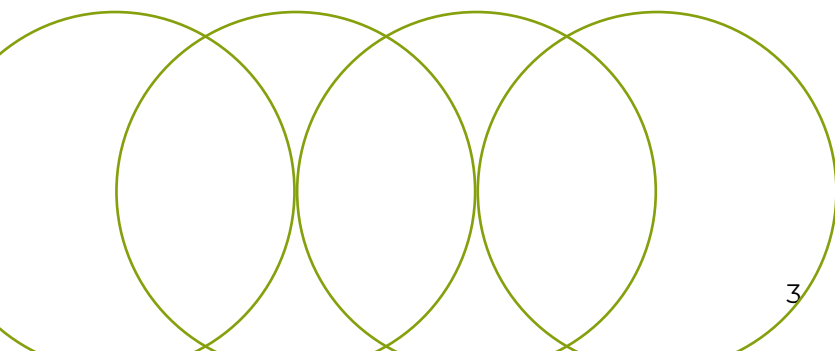


Acronyms

MRT – “Moldovan Republic of Transnistria” (terminology used by the ECtHR)
OSCE – Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe
UIN – illegal detention institution in the Transnistrian region
UN – United Nations
USD – United States dollar

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Executive Summary

The beginning of 2026 has been marked by growing risks and vulnerabilities for the population of the Transnistrian region of the Republic of Moldova. These developments stem both from new “legislative initiatives” advanced by the Transnistrian unlawful bodies, which may serve as additional instruments of repression, and from a deepening economic and energy crisis.

The report demonstrates that recent measures have further reinforced mechanisms of surveillance, control, and coercion affecting the local population. Particular concern arises from initiatives aimed at expanding military registration and monitoring of the male population, as well as from measures presented as “incentives” for young people to join paramilitary bodies, including exemptions from reimbursing education costs. In the context of staffing shortages within the region’s unlawful force and security bodies, these steps appear intended to reinforce the regime’s recruitment capacity. At the same time, documented cases continue to indicate that conscripts are subjected to pressure to sign long-term contracts with the so-called “Transnistrian army”. Young people enrolled in military schools from an early age appear especially vulnerable, as their future paths are treated as predetermined by the so-called “ministry of defence”, while attempts to leave this system may trigger reprisals.

The report also highlights the intensification of propaganda promoting the myth of a distinct “Pridnestrovian identity”, particularly against the backdrop of the region’s acute economic crisis. This narrative is disseminated not only through local propaganda channels, but also through the education system as a whole, including boarding schools and schools for children with special needs. Promo-LEX’s monitoring further indicates that the Transnistrian unlawful bodies continue to actively promote the enrolment of children in military schools and their participation in various camps at children’s centres in Russia and occupied Crimea, some of which are subject to international sanctions.

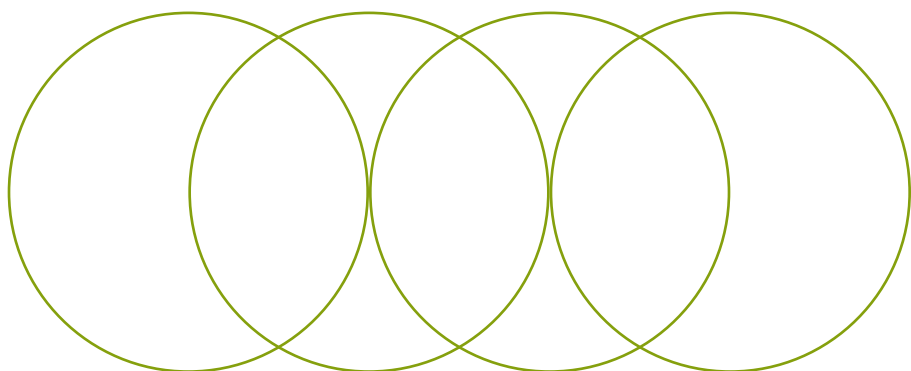
Additionally, the analysis highlights serious human rights violations in cases of unlawful detention, illustrated in particular by the case of Evghenii Pancioha. His deteriorating health, lack of adequate medical care, and detention in inhuman conditions reflect broader patterns of systemic neglect within the unlawful penitentiary system. These cases also expose the continuing vulnerability of victims after release, given the absence of an effective support mechanism on the right bank for former detainees.

These developments are compounded by the repeated extension of the state of emergency in the economy, disruptions in heating and gas supplies, and delays in salary payments, all of which indicate that the region’s financial and energy instability is placing an increasingly heavy burden on the local population.

Introduction

This quarterly monitoring report examines the human rights situation in the Transnistrian region of the Republic of Moldova, based on data collected through Promo-LEX's continuous monitoring. It is structured in two chapters. The first analyses "legislative initiatives" proposed or adopted by the Transnistrian unlawful bodies between January and March 2026 in order to identify relevant developments in the field of human rights and assess potential risks for the population. The second addresses the main issues shaping the human rights situation, including individual detention cases and related systemic abuses, post-detention support by the constitutional authorities, medical assistance in unlawful detention institutions, the politicization and militarization of children, and the socio-economic and propaganda context. The report draws on qualitative and quantitative methods in line with international human rights monitoring standards and is based on publicly available information, formal information requests, interviews and testimonies, field visits, discussions with local authorities, and comparative statistical analysis.

Note on terminology: The terms "minister", "law", or "government" are used solely for identification and do not imply legitimisation or *de jure* recognition of the occupation bodies, their functions, or the acts they issue.



“Legislative initiatives” with an impact on the human rights

“Legislative initiatives” of Transnistrian unlawful bodies

■ **Temporary extension of land access for Moldovan farmers from Dubăsari**

Resolution No. 8 of 26 January 2026, amending Resolution No. 12 of the so-called “government of the MRT” of 8 January 2024, concerning the “regulation of land use issues” in the Dubăsari district, formally extended Moldovan farmers’ access to their agricultural land until 1 May 2026¹. Any further extension is decided on a quarterly basis, creating significant uncertainty regarding the continuity of agricultural activities. Despite this extension, farmers continue to face abusive practices by the Transnistrian unlawful bodies, including arbitrary inspections, acts of intimidation, restrictions on the use of agricultural machinery, seeds, and fertilizers, as well as the unlawful afforestation of agricultural land.

■ **Expansion of civil registry reporting for military registration**

The proposed amendments to the so-called “law on universal military duty and military service”, published on 5 February 2026 by the so-called “supreme soviet”, expand the transfer of personal status data from “civil registry offices” to the Transnistrian unlawful paramilitary bodies². Under the new rules, “civil registry offices” must report monthly, by the 10th day of each month, all relevant changes affecting men aged 16 to 65, including marriage, divorce, name changes, and deaths. According to the explanatory note, the amendments were introduced because “civil registry offices” had not regularly transmitted such information in the past, largely because men were not required to indicate during civil status procedures whether they were registered for military service. In practical terms, the “amendments” broaden the scope of monitoring to encompass the entire male population aged 16 to 65, rather than only those already identified as conscripts. As a result, it is becoming increasingly difficult for individuals to avoid being entered into the records of paramilitary bodies, while changes of name or other personal data are no longer sufficient to effectively prevent or end such registration.

■ **Introduction of “fines” for online insults**

On 23 January, the so-called “supreme soviet” published a “legislative proposal” to amend the “contraventional code” by introducing fines for online insults³. The proposed “amendments” make several important changes. First, they broaden the definition of “insult” beyond statements expressed in an indecent form to also cover statements made “in another form contrary to generally accepted norms of morality and ethics”, a vague formula that allows broad and arbitrary interpretation. Second, they extend “administrative liability” for this “offence” to minors aged 14, following last year’s “amendments”, which lowered the age of such “liability” from 16 to 14 for several categories of so-called “offences”. Third, they introduce the notion of “repeated insult”, allowing harsher penalties for recurrence. Fourth, they expressly extend “liability” to insults committed through internet networks.

The maximum fine for online insults directed at residents could exceed USD 180¹. For public officials, it could reach approximately USD 390, and for legal entities up to USD 650. In cases of repeated public insults, including online, the fines would be even higher⁴.

On 18 March 2026, the “draft law” was adopted at first reading. Galina Antyufeeva, one of its co-authors, stated that by the second reading the authors plan to introduce similar “liability” for “defamation”, citing a growing number of cases involving defamatory information disseminated online. According to data presented by the so-called “ministry of internal affairs”, the number of offences recorded under Article 5.61 of the “code” (“insult”) rose from 1.111 in 2019 to 2.468 in 2024.

The explanatory note states that the purpose of these amendments is to align the “legislation” with Russian law, in accordance with “Order No. 586rp of 26 June 2007 on the approval of the concept and unified plan for the harmonization of MRT legislation with the legislation of the Russian Federation”.

Similar “provisions” already exist in the region and have been used to suppress freedom of expression. Insulting a representative of the Transnistrian unlawful bodies while performing “official duties”, or in connection with such duties, is punishable by a fine of approximately USD 230 to 400, compulsory labour for 120 to 180 hours, or corrective labour for six months to one year. Publicly insulting the so-called “president” may entail criminal liability punishable by up to five years’ imprisonment. One illustrative case is that of 74-year-old Mihai Ermurachi, who spent 26 months in illegal detention after allegedly referring to Vadim Krasnoselski as a “puppet” in a private conversation⁵.

■ **Tighter control over grants and other forms of foreign aid**

On 16 February 2026, the so-called “supreme soviet” published draft amendments to the “law on gratuitous assistance”, aimed at expanding the regulatory framework governing grants and other forms of foreign financial support⁶. The proposed changes introduce a separate category of gratuitous assistance equivalent to technical assistance, encompassing funds provided by foreign states, international organizations, and foreign NGOs in the form of grants, prizes, subsidies, and other non-repayable financial support for socio-economic development and social assistance. Such projects would be subject to mandatory registration with the Coordination Council for Technical and Humanitarian Assistance – the unlawful body responsible for approving any external assistance entering the region.

The “law on gratuitous assistance” prohibits the use of foreign assistance for “extremist activity”, “election campaigning”, the organization of public gatherings, and other forms of so-called “political activity” – a vague term that encompasses public appeals to the unlawful bodies, the expression of opinions on “official decisions”, and the shaping of socio-political views. This initiative should be seen in the context of the 11 February 2026 statement by Deputy Prime Minister for Reintegration Valeriu Chiveri on the planned Convergence Fund. More broadly, it reflects the efforts of the Transnistrian unlawful bodies to further restrict civic space and to ensure political control over any support that may be provided by the constitutional authorities to beneficiaries in the region.

¹ The conversion into USD was made according to the exchange rate set by the Transnistrian unlawful bodies, under which 1 USD is equivalent to 16.1 “Transnistrian rubles”, <https://www.cbpmr.net/kursval.php?lang=en>.

- **Attracting young people into paramilitary formations by exempting them from reimbursing education costs**

On 16 February 2026, a “draft law” amending the “law on education” was published. It proposes exempting certain persons from the obligation to reimburse the regional budget for the cost of education financed from public funds. Specifically, it is proposed that this exemption should apply to:

- ▶ servicemen performing compulsory military service who, prior to conscription, obtained secondary vocational or higher education funded from public resources, passed the final assessment, and subsequently concluded their first military service contract for a period of three years;
- ▶ male citizens in the reserve who, after graduating from higher education programmes financed from the budget and passing the final assessment, likewise concluded their first military service contract for a period of three years⁷.

The explanatory note states that the proposed measure is intended to encourage individuals to sign an initial three-year military service contract, thereby strengthening the region’s security and defence capacity. It also notes that it is impossible to predict how many such contracts will be signed, given that concluding a three-year military service contract is formally voluntary. However, Promo-LEX reiterates that documented cases indicate that, in practice, young people enlisted in the so-called “Transnistrian army” for compulsory military service are often coerced into signing such contracts. Particularly heightened risks are faced by those who were enrolled from an early age in the Suvorov Military School or the Cadet School^{8,9}. Another important aspect is that this proposal comes against the backdrop of staffing shortages within the region’s unlawful paramilitary and security bodies, thereby creating a context of even greater pressure for young people.

- **Extension of the “terrorist alert level” (yellow code)**

The “decree” signed by Vadim Krasnoselski on 2 March 2026 extends the so-called “terrorist alert” at the yellow level from 4 March 2026 until 3 May 2026¹⁰. The “terrorist alert code” was first introduced in April 2022 and has subsequently been renewed every three months. The continued state of alert serves as a tool for the regime to justify the ongoing application of heightened security restrictions and to sustain alarmist rhetoric portraying the region as being under “threat” from the right bank of the Nistru and from Ukraine, including as a pretext for refusing to issue the so-called accreditation required for journalists from the right bank to carry out journalistic activity on the left bank.

Chapter 2:

Key developments impacting human rights

2.1 Cases of human rights violations

The case of the unlawful detention of Evghenii Pancioha and the deterioration of his health condition

Evghenii Pancioha, a 42-year-old citizen of the Republic of Moldova originally from Tiraspol, has been unlawfully detained in the Transnistrian region for approximately eight years. In 2018, he was abducted by officers of the so-called “ministry of state security” in Tiraspol and subsequently “sentenced” to 13 years’ imprisonment for alleged “high treason”, on accusations of cooperating with the Ukrainian secret services¹¹.

The so-called “criminal proceedings” were conducted behind closed doors, the case file was reportedly classified, and he was denied effective access to both the case materials and legal assistance. His complaints and requests challenging the charges and the so-called “conviction” were repeatedly rejected by the Transnistrian unlawful bodies, highlighting the absence of any effective remedy against arbitrary detention. This should be viewed in a broader context in which numerous victims of unlawful detention have reported that “court-appointed lawyers” did not represent their interests, but instead passively observed the proceedings without raising objections, denouncing abuses, or submitting motions essential to the defence¹².

Evghenii Pancioha is currently held in the unlawful detention facility “UIN-2” in Tiraspol, in inhuman conditions and without adequate medical care, despite suffering from HIV, viral hepatitis, neurological disorders, and peripheral vascular disease. His health is deteriorating, including serious problems affecting his lower limbs, which place his life at risk and create a danger of irreversible consequences, including death in detention. At present, the only treatment actually being administered is antiretroviral therapy for HIV.

Promo-LEX called on the constitutional authorities to urgently seek Evghenii Pancioha’s immediate and unconditional release, request OSCE involvement to ensure an independent medical assessment at the place of his illegal detention, and support his transfer to a medical institution under the control of the constitutional authorities for appropriate treatment.

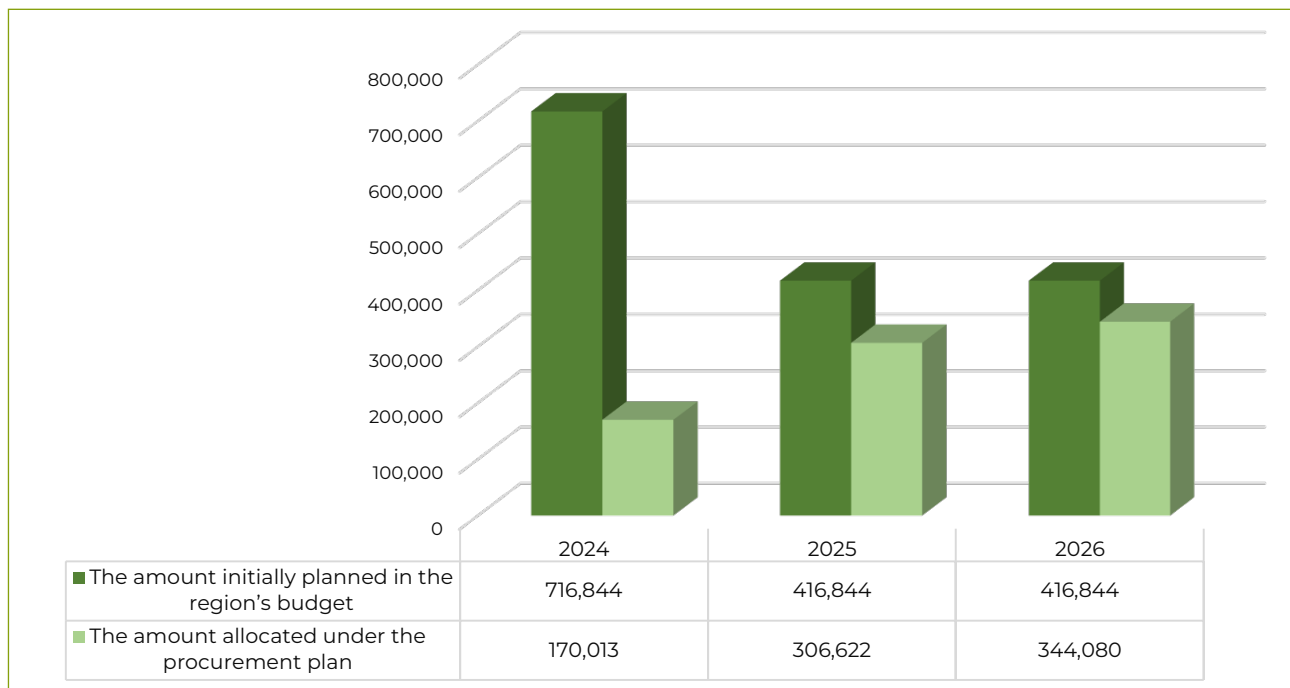
■ **Budgetary allocations for medicines and medical services in illegal detention facilities in 2026**

The case of Evghenii Pancioha and other illegally detained persons reflects a broader pattern of systemic neglect in illegal detention facilities with regard to detainees’ physical and mental health, as well as the severe underfunding of the system.

For 2026, the region’s central budget allocated 416.844 “Transnistrian rubles” (approximately USD 25.890) for medicines and other medical expenses in the “penitentiary system”¹³. Yet, as in previous years, a significant gap remains between the amounts formally budgeted and those actually reflected in the procurement plans. According to the version of the procurement plan for the unlawful penitentiary system dated 31 March 2026, only 344.080

“rubles”, or around USD 21.371, were earmarked for medicines and medical services, which is 72.764 “rubles”, or approximately USD 4.519, below the amount initially provided for in the budget¹⁴. Moreover, this amount may decline even further by the end of 2026, as shown by the procurement plans for 2024 and 2025, which were amended 61 and 43 times respectively.

Figure 1. Difference between expenditure planned in the region’s central budget and the amounts effectively allocated under procurement plans for medicines and medical services in the “penitentiary system”, 2024-2026



Source: prepared by the author on the basis of the [2024](#), [2025](#), and [2026](#) budgets and the [2024](#), [2025](#), and [2026](#) procurement plans.

The available data for 2024 also make it possible to assess the amount spent per detainee. According to the 2024 procurement data for the “penitentiary system”, actual spending on medicines and medical services amounted to only about USD 10.559 for 1.754 detainees, or approximately USD 6 per detainee per year¹⁵. Compared with the right bank of the Nistru, where the annual allocation for medicines and medical services was around USD 160 per detainee, this points to severe underfunding of medical care in the detention system controlled by the Transnistrian unlawful bodies¹⁶. The situation is further exacerbated by persistent shortages of medical personnel, which over the past four years have ranged between 25% and 40%, as well as by the absence of certain specialist doctors, including psychiatrists¹⁷.

The distribution of planned expenditure for 2026 itself reflects the scale of the financial constraints affecting the “penitentiary system”. Notably, staff remuneration and related social contributions account for 59.38% of the total budget, amounting to approximately 65.53 million “rubles”, or USD 4.07 million.

■ **Financial resources allocated to capital repairs and construction**

Another major issue affecting detainees’ well-being, including that of Evghenii Pancioha, concerns the material conditions of detention. An analysis of the allocations provided for repair works in the procurement plans confirms the deplorable state of material conditions in places of detention and reveals the absence of any genuine concern for improving them. A comparison between the sums earmarked for the repair of administrative buildings and those intended for the premises in which persons are illegally deprived of their liberty points to major budgetary imbalances. The data show that resources are directed primarily towards maintaining administrative infrastructure rather than improving detention conditions. As a result, the underfunding of detention premises reflects a systemic failure to ensure conditions compatible with minimum standards of human dignity.

Although this pattern can be observed over a number of years, the situation in 2026 is of particular concern. In 2024, 9.25 million “Transnistrian rubles” (approximately USD 574.545) were allocated for the repair of administrative buildings, whereas only 364.877 “rubles” (approximately USD 22.663) were designated for prison living spaces, resulting in a disparity of approximately 8.8 million “rubles” (approximately USD 551.882). The same trend remained evident in 2025, when approximately 1.67 million “rubles” (approximately USD 103.578) were earmarked for administrative buildings, compared with only 119.281 “rubles” (approximately USD 7.408) for prison living spaces, a difference of approximately 1.55 million “rubles” (USD 96.170). Measured against the total number of five places of illegal detention, the amounts allocated for repairs corresponded, on average, to only 72.975 “rubles” (approximately USD 4.532) per institution in 2024 and 23.856 “rubles” (approximately USD 1.481) per institution in 2025. Such levels of funding cannot be regarded as adequate even for strictly necessary routine repairs, let alone for more substantial rehabilitation works, particularly in the context of already deteriorated infrastructure.

Figure 2. Distribution of budget allocations for capital repairs and construction in the “penitentiary system” (administrative buildings vs. prison living spaces), 2024-2026



Source: prepared by the author on the basis of the [2024](#), [2025](#), and [2026](#) procurement plans.

The situation in 2026 is especially alarming. No funds whatsoever were allocated for the repair of residential premises, while administrative buildings continued to receive financing in the amount of 384.920 “rubles” (approximately USD 23.908), a circumstance that will further aggravate detention conditions against the background of the acute economic crisis.

■ The need for a functional post-release assistance mechanism

The case of Evghenii Pancioha highlights not only the harm endured during detention, but also the serious risks that would persist following release. After more than eight years of unlawful detention in inhuman conditions, he would remain in a situation of acute vulnerability and would require multidisciplinary support. At present, however, the existing legislative framework does not enable public institutions to provide such assistance, leaving victims without specialized services, protection, or guidance. The internal displacement to which they are often compelled to resort because of the ongoing risks of persecution and surveillance gives rise to specific and immediate needs, including guidance in navigating the institutional system, linguistic assistance, obtaining identity documents, access to medical and psychological services, and the provision of temporary shelter.

The issue of the lack of a functional mechanism enabling public authorities to provide assistance and support to persons released from unlawful detention in the Transnistrian region was recently raised for the first time in an individual communication submitted to the UN Human Rights Committee on behalf of Alexandr Dimov. The communication was prepared by Promo-LEX in partnership with the European Prison Litigation Network. It invokes the responsibility of the Russian Federation for the abuses committed in the region and, with respect to the Republic of Moldova, raises issues relating to the state's obligation to ensure effective post-release assistance and support to the victim¹⁸.

This issue, which has been raised by Promo-LEX for several years, was also addressed in the journalistic investigation entitled “There Is No Law for the Victims of the Tiraspol Regime”, published on 31 March 2026 by the “Cu Sens” Media Project¹⁹. The investigation shows that, once they reach the right bank of the Nistru, victims of the occupation regime encounter a new set of difficulties stemming from poor coordination among key state institutions and existing legislative gaps.

2.2. Politicization and militarization of education

The large-scale promotion of the myth of a distinct “Pridnestrovian identity” in schools

On 14 January 2026, all schools held a compulsory lesson entitled “The History of the Pridnestrovian People”²⁰. Organised on a quarterly basis by order of Vadim Krasnoselski, this activity forms part of the broader framework of the so-called “Year of the Pridnestrovian People”. It was implemented throughout the entire education system, including boarding schools and corrective institutions for children with special needs. This lesson should be understood not as an isolated educational activity, but as part of a broader effort to shape identity narratives from an early age. Its purpose is to instill the perception that the population of the region possesses an identity fundamentally distinct from that of the population on the right bank of the Nistru, thereby reinforcing a narrative used to legitimize the continued Russian occupation of the region.

In practice, these sessions expose children to propaganda promoted by Vadim Krasnoselski concerning the alleged formation of the so-called “Pridnestrovian people”. Children are also encouraged to produce symbols associated with the occupation regime, including its “flag” and “coat of arms”, in order to foster identification with the regime.

Figure 3. Pupils holding the occupation regime's flag during the “History of the

Pridnestrovian People” class in Tiraspol schools



Source: Telegram [Channel](#) of the “Department of Public Education of Tiraspol”, 2026

Alongside these lessons, the Transnistrian unlawful bodies also organise regional competitions centred on the same ideological themes. One such example is the “My Country, My Transnistria” contest, held at the Ukrainian Theoretical Lyceum in Tiraspol between February and March 2026, which reportedly involved around 50 pupils, including children from military schools. The content of the contest promotes the myth of “Pridnestrovian identity and statehood”, while framing the 1992 Moldovan-Russian war as an “act of aggression by Moldova”²¹.

The scale of this indoctrination campaign is considerable. In the 2025-2026 academic year, the region’s education system enrolled 74.115 children and young people across all levels, all potentially exposed to such activities²². Official rhetoric confirms their ideological purpose. In a statement issued on 29 January 2026, the so-called “government” explicitly noted that education had become an instrument for promoting “civic responsibility” and “a sense of belonging to one’s own nation”²³. These activities should also be viewed in the broader context of the extensive implementation of the “Year of the Pridnestrovian People” campaign throughout 2025. During that year alone, 443 excursions were organised for 43.770 school pupils and university students, more than 900 events were held, approximately 300 “patriotic” class sessions were conducted, and regime-controlled media produced around 850 propaganda materials²⁴.

Taken together, these developments indicate a systematic propaganda effort targeting children and young people through the education system. Advanced in a fragile context marked by multiple crises that have affected the image of the occupation regime, this campaign also appears aimed at consolidating its internal “legitimacy”.

Promotion of children's enrolment in military schools

Between February and March 2026, the so-called “ministry of defence” and “ministry of internal affairs” conducted a broad campaign to promote enrolment in the Bender Cadet School and the Suvorov Military School in Tiraspol, two military-profile educational institutions for children from the age of 11^{25,26}. The admission campaign is scheduled to continue until June 2026. The campaign targets parents of children enrolled in general education schools, particularly those from disadvantaged backgrounds. According to the information available as of February 2026, 266 children were reportedly enrolled in the Suvorov Military School, while another 150 were enrolled in the Bender Cadet School^{27,28}. Among them are children from boarding schools, a particularly vulnerable category given their lack of family support and the fact that they are not documented by the constitutional authorities of the Republic of Moldova.

These institutions constitute a key component of the paramilitary system in the Transnistrian region, serving as a primary channel for recruitment into the region's unlawful security and force bodies. Enrolment in such schools significantly narrows children's future professional options, as graduates are typically directed towards the Law Institute, the Military Institute, or directly into paramilitary formations and other unlawful force bodies. From an early age, pupils are educated in an environment that promotes loyalty to the occupation regime and reproduces the discipline, hierarchy, and behavioural norms associated with paramilitary and security bodies. In this context, exiting the system becomes extremely difficult, particularly given that graduates may subsequently be pressured to sign contracts with Transnistrian illegal bodies.

Accreditation of the general education system in the Russian Federation

In 2026, general education schools in the Transnistrian region may obtain accreditation in the Russian Federation, which would allow graduates of schools subordinated to the occupation regime to receive dual diplomas issued both by the Transnistrian unlawful bodies and by the Russian Federation. On 30 January 2026, Vadim Krasnoselski instructed the so-called “ministry of education” in Tiraspol to complete the accreditation process for the general education system²⁹. At present, only the programmes offered by the “T. G. Shevchenko” University are accredited in the Russian Federation. Over time, the alignment of the education system with Russian standards has contributed to the increasing politicisation of education and to the exclusive orientation of children towards the Russian information space.

Participation of children in internationally sanctioned educational centres in Russia and occupied Crimea

Between February and March 2026, the region's territorial education departments and schools promoted, through their Telegram channels, participation in various competitions organised by Russian entities such as the Association of Russian Schools Abroad, the Moscow House of Compatriots, the “My History” Foundation, and the Russian Children and Youth Center^{30,31}. These initiatives offered vouchers to the Artek and Orlyonok centres, both of which are included on international sanctions lists for their involvement in the forced transfer and deportation of Ukrainian children.

Ukrainian authorities and non-governmental organisations have repeatedly stated publicly that these children's centres are used to support Russia's war effort and to indoctrinate children, including those from occupied territories in Moldova, Ukraine, and Georgia. According to publicly available data, more than 100 children from the Transnistrian region have participated in various camps at these centres over the past nine years, including after the start of Russia's full-scale war of aggression³².

Risk of the forced placement of minors in closed-type institutions

On 26 January 2026, Vadim Krasnoselski proposed “amendments” to the local “legislation” that would allow the forced placement of adolescents aged 14 to 18 in the closed-type “A.S. Makarenko” institution for alleged “antisocial behaviour”³³. At present, only children under the age of 14 may be placed there. The initiative was introduced amid reported bullying in schools across the region. According to a 2025 survey conducted by the so-called “ministry of education” in Tiraspol among 9.000 respondents, 65% of school pupils and 87% of university students reported having experienced bullying, while 30% said they had been bullied by teaching staff³⁴. Rather than promoting responses consistent with international child protection standards, the Transnistrian unlawful bodies appear to favour coercive measures based on isolation and the involvement of unlawful security bodies in education. This is especially concerning given the nature of the “A.S. Makarenko” institution itself.

Although formally described as a corrective and socio-pedagogical facility, the institution operates under the control of the so-called “ministry of internal affairs” and places children in an isolated, punitive, and highly securitised environment. Available information indicates that children may be sent there not only for alleged unlawful acts, but also because they come from vulnerable backgrounds, lack identity documents, have been left without parental care, have run away from boarding schools, or are children of persons unlawfully detained. Testimonies further indicate that threats of placing their children in this institution have, at times, been used to coerce detained persons into confessing guilt. According to data published in 2022, around 11.000 minors had passed through the institution since its establishment in 1997³⁵.

According to the institution’s regulations, staff are authorised to conduct body searches, inspect belongings, and censor correspondence, while the absence of independent oversight creates a heightened risk of abuse and makes it difficult for children to report ill-treatment or seek outside help. Particularly alarming are the findings published by the so-called “ombudsman” in 2023 regarding the institution’s illegal temporary detention centre: children reportedly did not receive formal education during detention, and there was no clear information confirming effective contact with family members through visits or telephone communication³⁶. Since 2023, findings from subsequent visits have no longer been made public, further underscoring the opacity of the Transnistrian unlawful bodies. Moreover, public information indicates that children placed there are exposed to systematic “patriotic” indoctrination and Russian propaganda, while the 2023 report of the so-called “ombudsman” explicitly referred to “patriotic education” as one of its aims. It is also used as a recruitment base for the Cadet School in Bender.

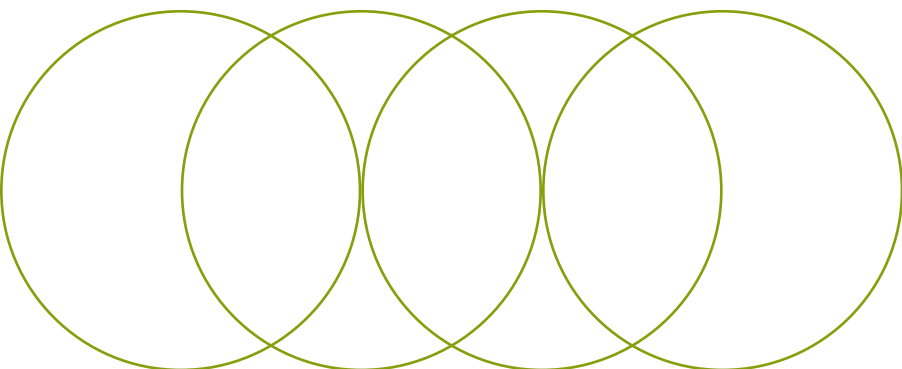


Figure 4. Organised visit of minors illegally detained in the “A.S. Makarenko” institution to illegal detention institution no. 3 (“UIN-3”) in Tiraspol



Source: [Novosti Pridnestrovie](#), 2017

Lastly, any deprivation of liberty of minors in the Transnistrian region is unlawful. The European Court of Human Rights has made clear that no so-called “MRT authority” may lawfully order detention, while UN standards require juvenile detention to be used only exceptionally, only as a measure of last resort, and for the shortest possible period of time. In this context, the proposed placement of children aged 14 to 18 in the so-called “Makarenko school” is particularly alarming.

2.3. Propaganda and disinformation narratives

One of the main themes promoted by local propaganda channels, including the written press, television, and Telegram channels, and further amplified by controlled Russian media, concerned the initiative of the constitutional authorities to establish a Convergence Fund and to gradually apply on the left bank of the Nistru the same taxes for economic agents as those imposed on companies on the right bank. While these measures aim to reduce disparities between the two banks and facilitating the region’s future reintegration into the legal framework and unified national spaces of the Republic of Moldova, propaganda in the region portrayed them as a “total blockade of Transnistria”, “financial extortion”, “an attempt to profit at the expense of the local population, to worsen living conditions, and to deepen divisions between the two banks of the Nistru”^{37, 38, 39}. On the “Novosti Pridnestrovie” portal, the region’s main news agency, a separate section entitled “Moldova’s Economic Pressure” was created, alongside quotations from the leaders of the occupation regime on this issue, further indicating that this narrative has become a central propaganda line.

Another major propaganda pillar during this period concerned the 1992 Moldovan-Russian war. On 2 March 2026, when the constitutional authorities marked the Day of Remembrance and Gratitude in honour of those who fell in the 1992 war defending the

country's independence and territorial integrity, propaganda in the Transnistrian region intensively revived narratives that distort the historical truth, portraying Moldova as the "aggressor" and Russia as the "guarantor of peace" on the Nistru^{40,41}. These narratives were disseminated not only through the so-called media, but also through propaganda events organised in schools, libraries, and cultural and community centres.

2.4. Socio-economic and energy context

Between January and March 2026, the state of emergency in the economy in the Transnistrian region was extended three times by decisions signed by Vadim Krasnoselski on 12 January, 6 February, and 19 March 2026, all of which were approved by the so-called "supreme soviet". These measures were adopted against the backdrop of an acute economic crisis and reduced gas supplies. By the end of February, the deteriorating economic situation had also led to changes in the payment schedule for public sector salaries, which began to be disbursed in two instalments: the first by the 20th of each month and the second by the 9th of the following month⁴². On 31 March, the so-called "government" announced that the second installment of February salaries had been paid and that all so-called local public administrations had met their payment obligations following transfers from the central budget to local budgets⁴³.

The energy crisis in the region escalated again at the end of February due to financial blockages that compelled the region to drastically reduce consumption. After 3 March, natural gas supplies were significantly reduced, the Cuciurgan Power Plant was switched to coal, and heating was suspended in 1.663 residential buildings and educational institutions⁴⁴. Heating continued to be provided only to kindergartens, hospitals, and residential social institutions. Gas supplies were also suspended to several major enterprises, including the Moldovan Metallurgical Plant, Tirotext, and the Tiraspol brick factory. On 10 March, the Transnistrian unlawful bodies announced that heating had been restored in schools across the region. On 16 March, they further reported that the problems related to gas supply and payment had been resolved, making it possible to restore heating in residential buildings from 17 March onward. Although representatives of the Tiraspol regime attributed this episode of crisis to developments in the Middle East, the region's energy vulnerability in fact persists because of the unsustainability of the current mechanism for the supply and payment of gas.

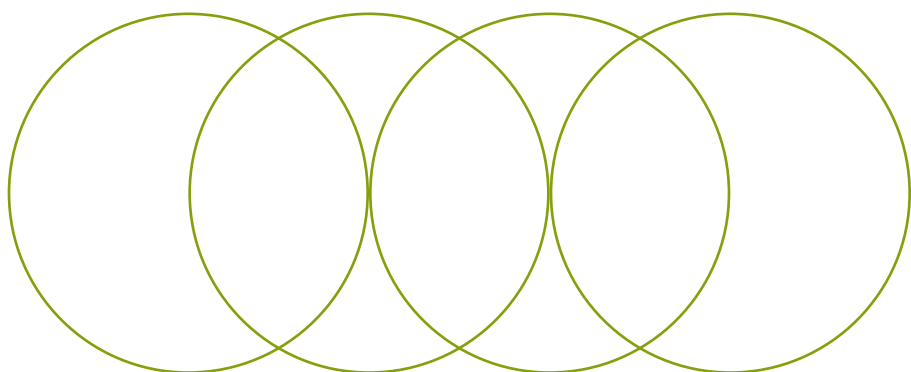
The region's central budget for 2026 also reflects significant financial constraints. It projects revenues of approximately 2.73 billion "rubles" (USD 167 million) and expenditures of approximately 5.67 billion "rubles" (USD 352 million), resulting in a deficit of 2.93 billion "rubles" (USD 185 million), equivalent to 51.74% of total expenditures⁴⁵. Yet, despite the acute economic crisis and the scale of the budget deficit, spending on defence and the so-called "law enforcement" and security bodies remains high, reaching approximately 1.05 billion "rubles" (USD 65 million), or 18.60% of total expenditures. Moreover, resources continue to be directed towards projects serving propagandistic purposes. Thus, 19.2 million "rubles" (USD 1.1 million) were allocated to the state programme "Improvement and Preservation of the Burial Sites of Heroes of the Soviet Union, Holders of the Order of Glory, and Memorials to the Military Glory of the Great Patriotic War" for the period 2024-2025⁴⁶.

Conclusions

The first quarter of 2026 confirms that the human rights situation in the Transnistrian region of the Republic of Moldova continues to deteriorate, driven by the repressive “legal framework”, the absence of effective assistance and protection mechanisms, and the acute economic crisis. As conditions in the region continue to deteriorate, the occupation regime is increasingly relying on a range of instruments to preserve control over the population, both by trying to retain personnel within its unlawful security bodies through coercive measures and by intensifying propaganda and ideological indoctrination.

The extremely difficult economic situation is further worsening detention conditions, which were already deplorable. Available data already indicate lower allocations than in previous years for medical care, food, and the maintenance of prison living spaces. Given the consequences of illegal detention for persons unlawfully deprived of liberty, the constitutional authorities should intensify their efforts to establish a functional mechanism for their protection and referral to specialised assistance services.

In addition, the militarization of children and the replication of Russian practices of politicizing education remain a matter of particular concern. In the long term, these developments may create serious challenges for the educational and informational reintegration of the region. Promo-LEX therefore reiterates the importance of anticipating these challenges through the development of a clear concept for the reintegration of education.



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