



Global Nonviolent Action Database

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Moldovan citizens campaign for new elections, 2009

Time period notes: *This encompasses the period of time during which the "Twitter Revolution" transpired. The unrest continued after these two weeks but focused on the presidential election rather than a rerun of the party elections.*

6 April

2009

to: 21 April

2009

Country: Moldova

Location City/State/Province: Chisinau, B?l?i

Goals:

To have an honest rerun of parliament elections

To have enough votes for any democratic party to win over the Communist Party

Methods

Methods in 1st segment:

- 016. Picketing
- 047. Assemblies of protest or support
- 131. Refusal to accept appointed officials
- 137. Refusal of an assemblage or meeting to disperse
- 153. Withholding of diplomatic recognition

Methods in 2nd segment:

- 047. Assemblies of protest or support
- 131. Refusal to accept appointed officials

Methods in 3rd segment:

- 001. Public speeches
- 047. Assemblies of protest or support
- 131. Refusal to accept appointed officials

Methods in 4th segment:

- 124. Boycott of elections
- 131. Refusal to accept appointed officials

Methods in 5th segment:

- 131. Refusal to accept appointed officials

Methods in 6th segment:

- 131. Refusal to accept appointed officials

Classifications

Classification:

Change

Cluster:

Democracy

Group characterization:

- Youth
- non-communist political parties
- students

Leaders, partners, allies, elites

Leaders:

Natalia Morar, National Salvation Committee

Partners:

The Liberal Party, the Liberal Democratic Party, and Party Alliance Our Moldova

External allies:

Not known

Involvement of social elites:

Chisinau Mayor Dorin Chirtoac?

Joining/exiting order of social groups

Groups in 1st Segment:

- National Salvation Committee

Groups in 2nd Segment:

Groups in 3rd Segment:

- Mayor Dorin Chirtoac?
- Students(exit)

Groups in 4th Segment:

Groups in 5th Segment:

Groups in 6th Segment:

Segment Length: 2.5 days

Opponent, Opponent Responses, and Violence

Opponents:

President Vladimir Voronin, Communist army and police, Party of Communists of the Republic of Moldova (PCRM)

Nonviolent responses of opponent:

Cutting off diplomatic ties by firing Romanian Ambassador of Moldova

Campaigner violence:

Injured police officers, stealing cars/trucks, breaking into buildings, burning documents including the Declaration of Independence

Repressive Violence:

Tear gas, police brutality, water cannons

Success Outcome

Success in achieving specific demands/goals:

2 points out of 6 points

Survival:

0 points out of 1 point

Growth:

0 points out of 3 points

Notes on outcomes:

After the first day, citizens were highly discouraged through means of violence and fear tactics from participating in further protests. Although they did not achieve a rerun of elections, they did get a recount of ballots and the PCRM did not obtain the 61 seats needed to have complete control. Thus, further elections were needed for the new president to be appointed rather than the president being chosen by the ruling party.

The Party of Communists of the Republic of Moldova (PCRM) came to power in 2001. Since 2003 some Moldovans were in conflict with the government with regard to issues such as national identity and foreign policy. Many Moldovans still identified as Romanian, creating confusion and division as to which nationality was historically more accurate. Due to constant shifts in rulers and boundaries, there has been debate over whether the Moldovan or Romanian identity should be recognized by the government.

On Sunday, 6 April 2009, a large number of Moldovan citizens participated in the Moldovan parliamentary election that would either reelect President Vladimir Voronin of the PCRM or allow for a new party to govern. The PCRM won 49.48% of the vote which gained them 60 parliament seats. This was one fewer than the 61 seats or the three-fifths rule necessary for a party to have control of the state.

Civil unrest began in the capital city of Chişinău and in the city of Bălţi on 7 April 2009 when demonstrators believed that the Moldovan parliamentary election was fraudulent. This election left the governing PCRM in power over the Democratic Party. Ten thousand protesters gathered in the city center on Ştefan cel Mare Boulevard in Chişinău and 7,000 in Bălţi, the majority of them young people and students. Twenty-five-year-old Moldovan journalist Natalia Morar was said to be responsible for starting the protests due to her posts on her live journal blog that helped spark the mobilization of protesters. Others used social media like Facebook and Twitter to raise awareness of the planned protests and flash mobs.

What was supposed to be a peaceful gathering marked by people holding lit candles turned far more intense. In Chişinău, the protest led to police using tear gas and water cannons to disperse the crowd but they were quickly outnumbered by the mass of protesters. Protesters broke into the parliament building and the president's office, smashing windows and setting fire to papers,

computers, and furniture. Some protesters tried to calm the others by raising the Romanian and European Union (EU) flags on top of the building. Eventually, students hijacked the fire trucks and drove them away.

Later that day, a group of protesters organized the National Salvation Committee (NSC), which consisted of student and civic representatives. The vice president of the committee said that the NSC's purpose was to organize a new election. These protesters were arrested later that night and never implemented their plan. Police arrested over 200 protesters. There were multiple prisoners coming forward with stories of the police violating human rights including instances of police ill-treatment, brutality, abuse, and torture. The journalist, Natalia Morar, was put under house arrest. The timing is unknown but the original Moldovan Declaration of Independence, signed on 27 August 1991, was burned some time during the unrest.

The next day, the emergency hospitals in Chişinău reported treating 78 injured officers and 270 protesters. The opposition demanded that the Moldovan government hold a reelection because of suspected voter fraud. Even though the death rate in Moldova had increased and the population had decreased, there was still a 10% increase in voter turnout, leaving 400,000 voters either unaccounted for or made up. However, President Voronin believed opposition to be a coup d'état attempt by Romanians. He reasoned that no Moldovans are "anti-Moldova or anti-Voronin" so he took measures against the Romanians. He announced that he would expel the Romanian ambassador of Moldova, introduce a new visa regime for Romanians, and close the border with Romania. He also expelled the second candidate for the Romanian ambassador and closed railways because they were "under repair".

On Friday, 10 April 2009, Voronin called on the constitutional court to authorize the protesters' demand for a recount of the votes. On the same day, protesters, organized through Twitter posts marked with the tag #pman (which represented the initials of Chişinău's biggest square), claimed that the government would use the threat of a Romanian coup as a reason to arrest people illegally. Protests continued on Sunday, 12 April 2009, when 3,000 demonstrators gathered in the same square to listen to the speech of the mayor of Chişinău, Dorin Chirtoacă. He said that the youth rejected Communism because they "understand that their future has been stolen." There were few students present due to the fact that many had been sanctioned at the last protest.

The same day, courts ruled in favor of a recount.

The three main opposition parties—the Liberal Party, the Liberal Democratic Party of Moldova, and the Party Alliance of Moldova—announced on 14 April 2009 that they would boycott the recount. They feared that the government would use the recount to increase its majority from holding 60 to 61 seats, thus allowing the PCRM to elect the next president. They also reasoned that recounting fraudulent ballots will still result in fraudulent numbers. On 21 April 2009, the results of the election were reconfirmed with PCRM winning 60 out of 61 seats, allowing them to stay in power.

After the civil unrest, the climate in Moldova became very polarized. The parliament failed to elect a new president because it still lacked the majority vote. The PCRM was still the ruling party, so they nominated individuals from their party for the presidential election. The remaining parties tried in various ways to hold new presidential elections and to stop cooperation with the PCRM in whatever way possible. Elections held in the summer of 2009 were all boycotted, leaving Voronin in the presidential seat until he resigned later that year.

On 11 September 2009, Vladimir Voronin resigned as president and the Alliance for European Integration, formed by four of the other political parties in Moldova, elected Mihai Ghimpu to serve as the interim president until the next election. No election was held to elect a new president by the end of 2009.

Vlad Filat, a member of the Liberal Democratic Party, served as interim president from 28 December 2010 to 30 December 2010. Marian Lupu, a member of the Democratic Party, served as interim president from 30 December 2010 to 23 March 2012. Eventually, Nicolae Timofti, a member of the Independent Party, was elected president on 23 March 2012. The Moldovan Declaration of Independence was recreated and an identical document was signed on 26 April 2010.

Research Notes

Sources:

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