

# *Human Rights Without Frontiers Int'l*

Avenue d'Auderghem 61/16, 1040 Brussels  
Phone/Fax: 32 2 3456145

Email: [international.secretariat.brussels@hrwf.net](mailto:international.secretariat.brussels@hrwf.net) – Website: <http://www.hrwf.net>



## *MISA, Gregorian Bivolaru & Yoga Practitioners in Romania*

### **Introduction**

### **MISA and its Yoga Schools: Now and Before**

### **Mediabolization & Social Panic**

### **Testimonies of Victims**

### **Conclusion**

**By Willy Fautré**

**Brussels, June 2013**

## Introduction

From 8<sup>th</sup> to 16<sup>th</sup> May, *Human Rights Without Frontiers Int'l (HRWF Int'l)*<sup>1</sup> carried out a fact-finding mission in Bucharest to investigate a wide range of problems faced by yoga practitioners in Romania.

*HRWF Int'l* delegation met numerous people who were victims of judicial and media harassment as well as discrimination, because they were practising yoga in MISA<sup>2</sup> schools: artists, teachers, engineers, medical doctors, professors and so on. Some even lost their job or their clients because of anti-MISA media campaigns intruding in their private life: a judge, a military, a policeman, a journalist, a medical doctor... An exceptional case involved a young female adult who was abducted by her family, confined to a psychiatric hospital, forcibly submitted to an inhuman medical treatment during two months and further confined by her family for nine more months in order to convince her to give up her yoga practice.

*HRWF Int'l* also talked with the chair of MISA's board of directors, the personal representative of MISA's spiritual leader Gregorian Bivolaru who is now living in Sweden as a political refugee, lawyers defending the rights of their clients, a former military judge, the head of APADOR (Association for the Defence of Human Rights in Romania) as well as a representative of Romanian civil society at the European Economic and Social Committee<sup>3</sup>.

*HRWF Int'l* visited an ashram and the library of MISA which was vandalized several times.

*HRWF Int'l* also had meetings with the National Institute of Human Rights, the National Council Combatting Discrimination and the Ombudsman (The Lawyer of the People) as well as with a representative of the Swedish embassy. The spiritual leader of MISA, Gregorian Bivolaru, had asked and obtained political asylum in Sweden in 2005 on the basis of a decision of the Supreme Court in Stockholm.

*HRWF Int'l* studied many court decisions, the media coverage of the 18<sup>th</sup> March 2004 police crackdown on 16 private homes of yoga practitioners and the ensuing judicial proceedings, two sociological surveys about MISA and the report of a Swedish anti-sect expert and theologian.

Last but not least, *HRWF Int'l* attended a hearing of the Supreme Court of Romania in the case of Gregorian Bivolaru, initiated against him in 2004, for charges of trafficking and engaging in sexual intercourse with several minors.

Gregorian Bivolaru and the people practicing yoga according to his teachings started to be harassed and repressed as early as the 1980s when Ceausescu banned this sort of activity. The accusations targeting Mr Bivolaru, distorted and amplified by the media, are the main source

---

<sup>1</sup> *Human Rights Without Frontiers Int'l* is independent from any religious or philosophical group and does not take any position about their beliefs, their doctrines or their teachings. *Human Rights Without Frontiers Int'l* also considers that the law is the same for all and must be equally applied to all.

<sup>2</sup> MISA: Movement for Spiritual Integration in the Absolute.

<sup>3</sup> He unsuccessfully took the issue of discrimination to the ECOSOC Committee in Brussels.

of the problems faced by MISA yoga practitioners in their personal and professional lives over the last ten years.

In this report, *HRWF Int'l* decided not to publicize the names of those who were interviewed; instead, their initials are used so as to preserve their privacy. Many of them had already tremendously suffered from unwanted media exposure and are still traumatized by this experience.

As the weight of pictures is often more convincing than words, *HRWF Int'l* has created links to a video in footnote 15 showing the violence of the police raid during the 18<sup>th</sup> March 2004 raid and the disrespect shown towards the yoga practitioners forced out of bed at gun point who were then almost naked. This was shown again and again on Romanian television. Links to other videos illustrate other aspects of the repression.

*HRWF Int'l* leaves it to the readers of this report to make up their own minds about this issue.

# MISA and its Yoga Schools: Now and Before

MISA (Movement for Spiritual Integration in the Absolute) is a non-profit organization registered on 23<sup>rd</sup> January 1990<sup>4</sup> by the District 1 First Instance Court in Bucharest. It was founded by 27 people, including Gregorian Bivolaru<sup>5</sup>. Its first objective is “to raise the cultural and spiritual level of people through an adequate, deeply beneficial preparation, to popularize knowledge in the fields of yoga”.

MISA is a loose network of training centers, yoga schools and ashrams<sup>6</sup>. Before the 2004 police crackdown, it numbered about 37,000 practitioners. In addition, there were about 40 ashrams in Romania where some 750 people were living and practising yoga.<sup>7</sup> After the 2004 events, the number dramatically decreased to about 20,000 due to the social panic instilled by the media. By mid-May 2013, there were 63 ashrams in Bucharest and 28 in other cities where more than one thousand practitioners had chosen to live. Yoga classes for outsiders are offered in about 70 Romanian cities.<sup>8</sup>

Various forms of yoga are taught and practised in MISA.

The MISA ashrams abide by the following rules:

- No meat, alcohol or coffee. No smoking. These rules are both for the residents of the ashram and for visitors.
- It is recommended to practice yoga daily for two hours, besides the yoga classes themselves.
- All residents take part in the household activities of the ashram, such as cleaning, house and garden maintenance, house shopping, and so on.
- Everyone must attend the ashram house meetings.
- Everyone must clean up after him/herself. .
- Silence is observed after 11 pm.
- Previous notification is required for overnight occasional guests.
- Everyone is asked to let the others know when he/she leaves on a holiday or a vacation.

---

<sup>4</sup> There are now MISA schools in the Czech Republic, Denmark, Finland, Germany, Hungary, Portugal, UK and in about 20 other countries around the world.

<sup>5</sup> Among the 27 founding members of MISA in 1990, there were 6 doctors, 13 engineers, 2 teachers, 1 economist and 1 psychologist. The list of the members of the board of directors in 2013 was rather similar.

<sup>6</sup> Traditionally, an ashram is a spiritual hermitage far from human habitation in India. The residents of an ashram regularly perform spiritual and physical exercises, such as various forms of yoga. In Romania, MISA ashrams are mainly situated in cities and used as places for living a simple life with others while practicing meditation and yoga. On 10<sup>th</sup> May 2013, HRWF Int'l visited an ashram on the outskirts of Bucharest in which more than a hundred yoga practitioners are living.

<sup>7</sup> Information provided by Gregorian Bivolaru during his hearing by the Supreme Court of Sweden in Stockholm in the framework of the procedure for a possible extradition to Romania in 2005 or the granting of political asylum.

<sup>8</sup> Statistics provided by Gabriela Ambarus, a medical doctor who has been the chair of the board of MISA since 2006 (Interview taken by HRWF Int'l in Bucharest on 14<sup>th</sup> May 2013).

## **The repression against MISA, Gregorian Bivolaru and yoga practitioners**

### ***Gregorian Bivolaru, the spiritual leader of MISA yoga classes***

The key figure and spiritual leader of the movement is Gregorian Bivolaru. Born on 13<sup>th</sup> March 1952, he started practicing yoga at the age of twelve. In 1970, he began teaching yoga to other persons. From 1972 on, he came into the attention of and was investigated by the Securitate<sup>9</sup> over seven times because of his correspondence on spiritual issues with Mircea Eliade<sup>10</sup>. In 1977, he was sentenced to one year in jail for alleged “possession and dissemination of obscene material”, a punishment for which he was fully pardoned on the ground of the pardon decree No 222/05.07.1976.

### ***Political persecution against Gregorian Bivolaru under Ceausescu***

True persecution against him began in the 1980s and was linked with what was then called “Transcendental Meditation Business.” The Securitate suspected him to be “the head of the TM group in Romania,” considered he was “the most dangerous man in Romania and was held in custody for 3 days during the investigation in 1982”<sup>11</sup>. It is in that year that yoga, martial arts and all forms of esoteric or spiritual practice were banned and the Faculty of Psychology was closed down.

Through the criminal case No 960/28.09.1984 of Bucharest Sector 4<sup>th</sup> Law Court, Gregorian Bivolaru was sentenced to one year and six months imprisonment for escaping while he was in custody on 13<sup>th</sup> July 1984 on the alleged grounds of “illegal dissemination of mystical publications”, of “working as yoga instructor without legal right” and “dissemination of obscene material”.<sup>12</sup> Two days after his escape, he was arrested again and imprisoned on the sole ground of running away.

In 1989, he was arrested again and sent to the Poiana Mare mental hospital<sup>13</sup>, a place then known to destroy the resistance of dissidents with all sorts of drugs. However, Dr L. H., who

---

<sup>9</sup> The Securitate was the secret police of Communist Romania.

<sup>10</sup> Mircea Eliade was a Romanian historian of religion, fiction writer, philosopher, and professor at the University of Chicago. He was a leading interpreter of religious experience, who established paradigms in religious studies that persist to this day. He was considered “enemy of public order” by the Communist regime in Romania.

<sup>11</sup> All the quotations of this paragraph are from the 1<sup>st</sup> July 2011 decision (14 pages) of the Bucharest Law Court/ III Civil Division recognizing that all the criminal sentences against him during the Communist period were politically motivated.

<sup>12</sup> For these charges, he benefitted from an amnesty (Art. 1 of Decree No290/1984).

All the quotations of this paragraph are from the 1<sup>st</sup> July 2011 decision of the Bucharest Law Court/ III Civil Division recognizing that all the criminal sentences against him during the Communist period were politically motivated.

<sup>13</sup> After the 1989 revolution, this mental hospital unfortunately kept its bad reputation. In the case *The Centre for Legal Resources on behalf of Valentin Câmpeanu v. Romania*, the European Court asked the Romanian Government to account for its treatment of a HIV-positive, intellectually disabled young man of Roma ethnicity, which resulted in his death at the notorious Poiana Mare Psychiatric Hospital in Romania. The case, brought on behalf of Valentin Câmpeanu by the Romanian NGO “Centre for Legal Resources” supported by Interrights, was communicated to the Romanian Government by the Court on 7<sup>th</sup> June 2011. A second case is pending before the European Court on similar issues - [Malacu and others v Romania](#). Hundreds of patients

was in charge of him, did not find any mental disorder and on his own initiative he took the risk not to administer him any psychiatric medication. Bivolaru was released after Ceausescu was assassinated on 25<sup>th</sup> December 1989. On 1<sup>st</sup> July 2011, in the aftermath of the declassification of the Securitate's archives, the Bucharest Law Court/ III Civil Division<sup>14</sup> ruled that all three criminal sentences against Gregorian Bivolaru under the rule of Ceausescu (20<sup>th</sup> January 1977; 9<sup>th</sup> November 1984 and 19<sup>th</sup> August 1989) were fabricated by the regime and politically motivated.

### ***Renewed persecution after Ceausescu and the 18<sup>th</sup> March 2004 mass-scale crackdown***

In 1995, the Romanian Secret Services (SRI), the follower of the Securitate, restarted monitoring the activity of Gregorian Bivolaru and MISA on the alleged ground that they were threatening the national security although neither MISA nor its leadership had ever been responsible for illegal activities. From 1996 on, MISA has been targeted by on-going media campaigns. On 18<sup>th</sup> March 2004, they reached a climax with the so-called "CHRIST" operation when 300 masked policemen from the anti-terrorist forces crashed into 16 private homes of yoga practitioners, including the MISA library and some ashrams in Bucharest. The police removed people from their beds<sup>15</sup> and forced them out at gun point during their search<sup>16</sup>. The apartment of Gregorian Bivolaru was vandalized by police, and the door and windows were broken. Several individuals were taken to the police station and interrogated. Police video recordings of people in humiliating situations were leaked to the media and widely broadcasted. The police confiscated study materials about yoga, books and brochures as well as private diaries and tapes of some yoga practitioners that were leaked to the media and used for slandering. In the aftermath of the raid, the Prosecutor's Office filed a court case on sexual abuse of a minor (Art. 198 par. 2 and 3 of the Criminal Code) and sexual perversion (Art. 201, par. 2 and 31 of the Criminal Code) as well as human trafficking<sup>17</sup>

---

died in suspicious circumstances at the Poiana Mare Hospital during the 1990s and early 2000s. The Committee for the Prevention of Torture visited this establishment three times, in 1995, 1999 and 2004, issuing on each occasion damning conclusions regarding the conditions it found there.

<sup>14</sup> File No 48765/3/2010: HRWF Int'l is in possession of the 14-page judgment in Romanian and a notarized translation of it in English. The persecution of Gregorian Bivolaru is extensively detailed from 1970 until 1989.

<sup>15</sup> See video showing the violence of the police and their disrespect for the yoga practitioners at <http://stopabuses.eu/ro/articole/9-ani-de-abuzuri-in-cazul-misa-gregorian-bivolaru/>

<sup>16</sup> General Dan Voinea, who was the Head of the Military Prosecutor's Office told HRWF Int'l on 14<sup>th</sup> May 2013 that MISA victims of the CHRIST operation had lodged complaints against the SRI and the judiciary and acknowledged that there had been obvious abuses. However, he could not monitor the follow up of the complaints as he was afterwards transferred to another position. See also his two long interviews on AXA TV Transilvania: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=h8beNAC61lw> (21'43'') and [http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HRmpX9aRs\\_c](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HRmpX9aRs_c) (12'58'').

<sup>17</sup> Law 6787/2001 on " Trafficking in human beings offences"

"Art.12 – (1) It is an offence for anyone who recruits, transports, transfers, harbours or receives a person, by means of threat or use of force or other forms of coercion, of abduction, of fraud, of deception, of the abuse of power or by taking advantage of that person's inability to defend him-/herself or to express his/her will, or by giving, offering or receiving of payments or benefits to achieve the consent of a person having control over another person, for the purpose of exploitation and is punishable by imprisonment for 3 to 12 years and interdiction of certain rights." (Source: <http://www.e-notes-observatory.org/legislation/romania/>)

There are however special provisions for trafficking in minors, an aggravated circumstance, as it is assumed that a minor (under the age of 18) does not have the capacity to give consent and he/she is considered a victim de facto.

allegedly committed by Gregorian Bivolaru. The concerned minor was interrogated for 13 hours without the help of a lawyer and outside the presence of her parents. She was forced to write a statement that was afterwards misused to give her the status of injured party – first without her knowledge and afterwards against her will - and to incriminate Gregorian Bivolaru. Despite the fact that with the help of a lawyer she retracted her statement the next morning, the case was channelled through irreversible judicial proceedings. Later on, Gregorian Bivolaru was accused of alleged illegal border crossing attempt.

In its annual report 2004<sup>18</sup>, APADOR, the Association for the Defence of Human Rights in Romania (The Helsinki Committee) commented on the 18<sup>th</sup> March 2004 events as follows:

The measures taken by the authorities against members or sympathizers of MISA and against the Movement itself were illegal, disproportionate, combining intimidation, instigation and harassment with abusive accusation and detention. During the events, personal freedom, the right to be presumed innocent until proven guilty, the right to legal representation, the right to privacy, the right to peaceful demonstration, etc:

During the days of searches – starting on March 18<sup>th</sup>, 2004 – prosecutors, gendarmes, police and SRI agents (secret service), most of them wearing masks, led a brutal action, using force unnecessarily or excessively and in breach of procedures:

- they broke doors and windows to enter buildings although nothing hampered their access;
- the residents were hit, pushed to the ground and threatened with guns. Over 80 people were taken to the Prosecutor's Office, where they were asked to sign statements under threat;
- they confiscated a large amount of objects and documents without any reason: the search minutes had errors of procedure and content;
- search warrants were not always produced when entering a building;
- in many of the raids, the prosecutors left no copy of the search minutes;
- MISA members or sympathizers were videotaped while scarcely dressed or in humiliating postures;
- MISA members or sympathizers were prevented to contact their lawyers.

The infringement of rights and freedoms during the actions of the 'forces of public order' on 18<sup>th</sup> April, 2004<sup>19</sup>, was continued by the violation of privacy and of the right to reputation. The pictures and videotapes made during the raids were used to

---

Human trafficking does not necessarily imply illegal border crossing. The accusation of human trafficking in this case is related to volunteer work of yoga practitioners in ashrams, perceived as exploitation, although this practice is common in religious and non-religious organizations.

<sup>18</sup> See <http://www.apador.org/en/index.htm>

<sup>19</sup> An analysis of the violations of the European Convention on Human Rights was published on the website of Soteria International: <http://soteriainternational.org/sv/misa-case/198-short-exposition-of-the-violations-of-the-convention-for-the-group-of-yogis-investigated.html>

discredit the victims. The authorities sent TV stations images accompanied by mystifying comments. Thus, a syringe, videotaped in the home of a ... doctor, suggested an alleged drug abuse. The doctor was videotaped while subjected to a degrading treatment during the whole search and threatened that she would be indicted, in the absence of any trace of evidence, for drug use. As a result of this manipulation, MISA members had to ask the Forensic Institute to test their blood for traces of drugs, in order to prove that they were not drug users.

The forceful actions of the prosecutors, gendarmes, police and SRI agents violated the constitutional norms, domestic legislation (mainly, the Criminal Procedure Code) and international agreements ratified by Romania.

The victims filed numerous complaints against the infringement of their rights and liberties. The flagrant violations should determine the Public Ministry to take notice, while the top ranking officials from ministries and other institutions involved are under obligation to take administrative steps in order to punish those responsible. Investigating and punishing the SRI agents, police, gendarmes and prosecutors who infringed upon human rights and fundamental freedoms before, during and after the MISA searches is essential to safeguard the principles of a democratic state.

### ***Bivolaru declared not-guilty in 2010 and 2011***

On 23<sup>rd</sup> April 2010, after numerous judicial proceedings, the president of the panel of judges of Sibiu Tribunal (Criminal Department), Daniela Czika, pronounced a not guilty decision for Gregorian Bivolaru on all the charges brought against him: sexual intercourse with minors<sup>20</sup>, human trafficking and exploitation. The Prosecutor's Office appealed the decision but on 14<sup>th</sup> March 2011, the Court of Appeal of Alba Iulia rejected "as ungrounded the appeal formulated by the Prosecutor's Office attached to the Sibiu Tribunal against criminal sentence no. 86 of 04.23.2010 given by Sibiu tribunal – Criminal Section, in file no. 405/85/2005".

### ***The High Court for Cassation and Justice orders a re-trial in 2012***

On 12<sup>th</sup> April 2012, the High Court for Cassation and Justice dismissed the decision of the Sibiu Tribunal and the Alba Iulia Court and ordered a retrial on the merits of the trial of judges Ionut Matei, Ioana Bogdan and Cristina Rotaru. Nine years after the raid, the case is still on-going.

On 9<sup>th</sup> May 2013, the Supreme Court in Bucharest held a new hearing<sup>21</sup> in the lawsuit against Gregorian Bivolaru who got the status of political asylum in Sweden in 2005. The lawyers of

---

<sup>20</sup> Some years after the 2004 raid, two other girls had declared that Gregorian Bivolaru had sexual intercourse with them when they were minors, but Judge Daniela Czika ruled that their allegations had not been supported by any evidence.

<sup>21</sup> HRWF Int'l attended this court hearing which lasted for about half an hour. The courtroom was packed with people. MISA practitioners were silently and peacefully demonstrating outside the Supreme Court.

Bivolaru then repeated their urgent request that their client be heard by a Romanian rogatory commission in Sweden.

### ***Final judgment***

On 14 June 2013, one month after *HRWF Int'l* fact-finding mission, Gregorian Bivolaru:

- was sentenced to 6 years in prison and 5 years of deprivation of his civil rights for the offense of repeated sexual intercourse with a minor (M.D.);
- was acquitted of the charges of sexual perversion concerning M.D., trafficking in minors in respect to M.D. and S.I. and sexual intercourse with two minors (S.I. and M.A.A.)

The criminal proceedings against him for the offense of attempted illegal crossing of the state border of Romania were dropped.

The only ground that was kept for one accusation was a statement made by a minor (M.D.) after hours of interrogation without the assistance of her lawyer and outside the presence of her parents, a statement that she withdrew with her lawyer the next morning.

MISA, as a legal entity, was never indicted.

In the aftermath of the judgment, MISA and yoga practitioners were heavily criticized and warned against in the media in very offensive terms<sup>22</sup>.

### **MISA expertise by Swedish ‘sect’ specialist Karl-Erik Nylund**

On the occasion of the hearing of the Supreme Court of Sweden in 2005 about the possible deportation of Gregorian Bivolaru to Romania and his request for political asylum, a notorious “sect expert” was hired to investigate the MISA movement: Karl-Erik Nylund<sup>23</sup>. During his research work, Nylund cooperated with Örjan Hultaker, Dr in Sociology and Head of the SKOP-Research Skandinavisk Opinion AB Institute. He said in his report:

MISA cannot be called a rigid spiritual movement. Such a movement would not allow criticism. Within MISA, everyone is free to criticize the aspects related to its activity or even the teachers. Also, every person is free to leave the yoga school without fear of retaliation. (...)

MISA is not a manipulative sect. For a movement to be a manipulative sect, it also has to **comply with three of the four A-s:**

**Aggression** – punishment of the members criticizing the leader or the movement.

---

<sup>22</sup> See for example the following video: <http://stopabuses.eu/ro/articole/radu-banciu-instiga-opinia-publica-la-ura-impotriva-misa-gregorian-bivolaru/>

<sup>23</sup> Karl-Erik Nylund is a doctor in theology and a priest. He has published many books about new religious movements such as Hare Krishna.

**Aversion** – criticism and persecution of the people outside the group such as parents for instance.

**Alienation**– closed circuit inside the sect, as a geographical or ideological group. The sect becomes the new family.

**Absolute truth** – only exists within the sect, and the leader/leaders is/are entitled to the absolute right of interpreting the truth.

During my conversations with the MISA practitioners and teachers, I found nothing of the first two A-s (Aggression and Aversion). With regard to the ashram life, only a part of the persons live there and the activities are not the closed circuit type. The courses are accessible to anyone from the outside. Anyone may attend the courses. Therefore we ARE NOT talking about alienation. (...)

In the MISA case, we can find none of the criteria defining manipulative sects. (...)

The radical religious groups, such as the Guyana movement from the 70's, the Heaven's Gate movement from the 90's or David Koresh from Waco/USA, are examples of groups that imposed a strict discipline to their members. The leader's word represented the law for the others till death. The MISA Yoga School IS NOT such a group.

If MISA is not a manipulative and dangerous sect, then what is it? I could say about MISA that it is a movement supporting a different way of life, alternative therapies, displaying strong Gnostic syncretism features. The basic ideas are reincarnation and self-transformation (the ability to transform oneself). A cult is a movement often emerging in a psychic deprivation environment, when people gather around a leader. MISA is a yogi movement where the participants aim at self-perfecting and improving their state of health and harmony through a lacto-vegetarian diet and yoga techniques.

The observations of Karl-Erik Nylund are corroborated by a 3-year sociological research work carried out by Carmen Marcus which was published under the title "Scientific psychosociological study regarding MISA" in the Review of Social Research (Revista de Cercetari Sociale, Nr 3/ 1997).

In this study, she said in her conclusions: "62.5% of subjects consider being open to their own religion, which is mainly Orthodox Christianity. This demonstrates that yoga is not in itself a religion, since the student is affiliated to another religion. Moreover, the fact that there is a genuine openness to authentic, traditional religion, with all the values it contains, leads us to doubt, at least in a first phase, the possible sectarian aspect of the movement.

In support of this idea comes the fact that the subjects positively appreciate the values of the dominant society, such as professional achievement and material welfare which, even if not part of the central node of the representation of the value system, have an essential place.

Also, a cult assumes a closed system. The yoga course is an open system although there are cases where some people have given up this course permanently or temporarily, returning after different periods of time. Students do not have any obligations, in addition to a monthly fee required for paying the rent of the classroom and a minimum attendance, in order to be able to assimilate the information taught.

### **A Sociological survey about MISA: Some statistics**

In May 2005, a group of specialists started a psycho-sociological investigation involving 300 MISA yoga practitioners who were given a questionnaire about their level of education, their social and professional profile, their health, their family life and so on. Sociologist Angela Anghel published the result of this investigation in an article entitled “Figures That Speak: Sociologists Depicting the Portray of MISA Yogi”.

The age of the participants in this research varied between 17 and 70 years.

The statistics clearly show that most of the practitioners fall in the range of 30-40 years: only 4% was under 20; 11% between 21 and 25; 16% between 26 and 30; 44% between 30-40 years; 14% between 40 and 50; 11% between 50 and 70.

Concerning the level of studies of the yoga practitioners, the results were as follows: 64% of the interviewees had completed their university education and 17% of them were involved in post-graduate studies, including PhD; another 12% were still at the university.

Concerning the (un)employment level of the interviewees at the time of the survey: 82% were professionally active as employees (64%) or self-employed (12%) or free-lance (3%); 4% were retired and 14% were not working but a number of them were still students. Before practising yoga, 40% were not working and 59-60% had a job.

Other characteristics of the yoga practitioners indicate that 94% are lacto-vegetarian and while 37% used to smoke before, nobody smoked any more at the time of the survey. No one was taking drugs either.

Most of the practitioners (67%) considered that the practice of yoga did not cause any convenience to them. Among other answers, they mentioned: public discrimination and disgrace, disapproval of their acquaintances, friends or family because of the media coverage.

All practitioners said that yoga brought them multiple benefits on several levels: health improvement, increased faith in God, a positive and optimistic life attitude, a better understanding of the reality, inner balance, freedom from prejudices and complexes, increased self-confidence.

These statistics reveal a reality that is very different from the clichés published by the media in Romania. MISA yoga classes do not attract a high percentage of young people and the few minors who practise it usually come from families of yoga practitioners. They are socially and professionally integrated. They are mainly intellectuals in search of physical and

psychological well-being and of deeper spirituality. They do not leave their religion because they practise yoga and sometimes they even feel more Orthodox than before.

And sociologist Angela Anghel concluded “The language used by those who answered such questionnaires is far from the fanaticism, stereotypes or rigidity of a denominational sectarian language. On the opposite, it displays intelligence, power of reason, common sense, good social anchoring and a high education level.”

## **Mediabolization<sup>24</sup> and Social Panic**

The second main actor in the MISA case, apart from the judiciary, was the printed and audio-visual media in post-December 1989 Romania. Only few of them fairly and impartially covered the issue.

From March 2004 to October 2005, and only on national TV stations such as TVR1, Realitatea TV, Pro TV, Antena 1, 2, 3, National TV, Prima TV, BITV, N24 and OTV, 570 pieces of news hostile to MISA and Gregorian Bivolaru were broadcast, according to APADOR, the Association for the Defence of Human Rights in Romania (The Helsinki Committee), founded in 1990.

APADOR largely covered the situation of MISA and its members in its annual report in 2004 under the title “The campaign against MISA and the violations of its members’ and sympathizers’ rights”.<sup>25</sup> Here are some extracts:

### **A Precedent: The Tg. Mureş campaign, September-October 2003**

“In September 2003, the Tg. Mureş press, the local studio of **Antena 1** TV, the local edition of **Jurnalul Național** and other media launched a campaign against yoga trainers and trainees in the city, and against MISA, the organization running the yoga courses. They were accused of drug abuse, sexual orgies and tax evasion without any evidence. Two of the trainers were summoned at the Regional Centre against Organized Crime and Drugs. Here they were offended and compelled to sign incriminating statements against MISA and the movement’s spiritual leader, Gregorian Bivolaru. According to the two trainers, investigating inspector Beldeanu declared that he was going to kill both them and Bivolaru when out of duty”.

The TV programs **Actualitatea mureșană** of 2<sup>nd</sup> October 2003 and **Observator** of 3<sup>rd</sup> October 2003 presented a list of persons who attended yoga sessions – name and workplace included. By dubbing them guilty of “illegal acts”, “brainwashing” and “substance abuse” the media campaign represented an instigation of public opinion against those who practiced

---

<sup>24</sup> Mediabolization means victimization by the media.

<sup>25</sup> See <http://www.apador.org/en/index.htm>

yoga. The effects were immediate. People on the list were summoned by their bosses and threatened with termination, if they insisted to attend yoga courses. Others had problems with their families.

Given the methods used in the Tg. Mureş campaign and the attitude of investigators towards people summoned to the Regional Centre, the events in 2003 seem to have prepared the massive action against MISA members and sympathizers launched in March 2004 in Bucuresti.”

### **The gendarmerie raid on 18<sup>th</sup> March 2004**

“On 18<sup>th</sup> March 2004, over 300 Gendarmes, prosecutors, police and secret service agents wearing masks raided simultaneously 16 buildings where MISA members held their activities. Doors and windows were smashed to pieces, although the buildings could have been entered peacefully. The people inside were brutalized, pushed to the ground, threatened with guns and some of them handcuffed. There were cases when they were held at gunpoint for hours. In some of the raided buildings, warning gun shots were fired.

“People were coerced to sign statements worded by the prosecutor. Personal belongings were confiscated without being mentioned in the search warrant minute. The detainees were prevented to contact their lawyers.

“The raids were videotaped and showed on TV. Later, further pictures were shown on TV, aiming to discredit the detainees and suggest that they were guilty. But no one was put on preventive arrest or detained following these raids.

“Over 20 searches took place over the following days. Truckloads of materials were confiscated abusively from the searched buildings and the 15 MISA storage houses.”

### **The media campaign 2004-2005**

#### ***“Instigating and libelous presentations”***

The following excerpts from newspapers (the TV materials sounded very much the same) published right after the gendarmes’ raids, prove, in themselves, the instigating and libelous character of the presentations: “*During the raids, various substances have been found, of which we cannot tell for sure if they are drugs or not*” (**Cotidianul**, March 22<sup>nd</sup>); “*the raids were triggered by complaints made by several citizens regarding prostitution and drug dealing activities in several slums of Bucuresti*”; “*the state authorities raided buildings where pornographic and erotic video-chat activities were going on*” (**Ziua**, March 20<sup>th</sup>); “*Porno materials in the home of a university teacher*” (**Evenimentul zilei**, March 22<sup>nd</sup>); “*In this truck, various compromising materials have been found, among which pornographic*

*magazines, and books of the MISA cult*” (**Adevarul**, March 22<sup>nd</sup>) and so on. The term “sect” was deliberately used to describe MISA.

The media therefore supported the authorities during the first days after the raids, when the actions in force tried to persuade the public opinion that those raided and searched on 18<sup>th</sup> March were guilty of crimes. It is highly improbable that journalists didn’t know that police are not allowed to break into somebody’s home only because “there have been crimes in the neighbourhood”.

Basically, most media tried to turn the population against MISA and trigger a “witch-hunt”. Significant, in this respect, was the information, proved to be untrue, that Gregorian Bivolaru was taken to the police station by a group of people. The way the information was announced represented an invitation for the people to hunt down MISA members.

### ***Intoxication of the media by the authorities***

The information received by journalists from the authorities contained a series of accusations, which were thus promoted by the media: drug use, human traffic, etc. The accusations proved to be unfounded. The video footage was meant to induce the idea of guilt into public opinion. The police video was released to the media and shown on TV in a total breach of the right to reputation. For example, a syringe, filmed in the home of a doctor woman, was presented as having been used for drugs. The situation determined several members of MISA to ask the Forensic Institute for tests to show they had no drugs in their blood.

The image of P. N. E., taken from the toilet with her panties down and threatened at gunpoint to stand in that posture next to the doorman of the building, was shown as evidence of the promiscuity in which MISA members allegedly indulged. Several pictures of MISA members in bathing suits, found during the searches, were also shown on TV. Sometimes their actual photos were edited alongside other images for a more convincing effect.

The culmination of these unacceptable violations of privacy was the release and publication of a personal diary to the media – that of M.D., a minor. The author declared that the diary contained her erotic fantasies. However, the diary was the ground on which Gregorian Bivolaru was later arrested.

### ***Some media took distance***

At a certain point, the media began to distance themselves from the actions of the authorities, proving that state institutions involved in hunting down MISA were the main source of intoxication. The press started to notice that there was no support for the information released by the authorities: “*The importance given to the Bivolaru case ... is hardly sustainable by the evidence shown yesterday by representatives of the institutions involved: the Prosecutor’s Office, the Police, the prosecutors*” (**Cotidianul**, March 25<sup>th</sup>, 2004).

Other newspapers too later accused the authorities to have attempted a political manipulation. One of the widest accepted explanations was that the whole campaign against MISA and its spiritual leader Gregorian Bivolaru was aimed to cover the escape of Gabriel Bivolaru, a man close to the ruling PSD party, who was imprisoned for fraud and whose name could be easily mistaken with that of Gregorian's.

The sobering of the media was partly due to a press release issued by APADOR-CH on 15<sup>th</sup> April 2004. In its analysis, APADOR-CH pointed out that if certain members of MISA had committed crimes, they were to be tried in court as individuals, according to equitable procedures and judgments.”

## Testimonies of Victims<sup>26</sup>

### **M. D.: A forced accusation of sexual abuse against Gregorian Bivolaru<sup>27</sup>**

At 8 am on 18<sup>th</sup> March 2004, while she was just waking up from her night rest, M. D., then aged 17 years and a half<sup>28</sup>, was suddenly surrounded by some fifteen armed and masked policemen and gendarmes bursting through the windows into the house of her female friend M.F. where she was temporarily living during the renovation work of the apartment she lived in with her boyfriend R.L.. While she was just barely dressed, someone started filming her from half a meter distance<sup>29</sup>.

Her narrative of these events was summarized as follows by the Supreme Court of Sweden<sup>30</sup> in its 21 October 2005 decision in the case of extradition of Bivolaru requested by Romania:

She thought they were thieves. She was frightened and ran thinly dressed into her girlfriend's room where she tried to hide. In a minute, black-dressed men got into the room and aimed weapons at them. They were ordered to lay themselves down on the floor where she was left thinly dressed for half an hour. When tried to get up, she was kicked in her chest. After many hours, during which search of premises went on, she was brought to a place unknown to her which, as was told her later, belonged to the Prosecution Authority. There she was humiliated and forced - as dictated by the interrogation officers supported by a female psychologist, who pulled her hair from behind when she refused to obey what she was ordered and with armed guards at the door – to write an accusation against Gregorian Bivolaru<sup>31</sup>. She was also forced to swallow some tablets of unknown kind. She estimates the duration of the hearing to

---

<sup>26</sup> Interviews of *HRWF Int'l* on 9-10 May 2013.

<sup>27</sup> M.D., her fiancé at the time and her lawyer, Adina Solomon, were interviewed by *HRWF Int'l* in Bucharest on 10<sup>th</sup> May 2013.

<sup>28</sup> She was born on 13<sup>th</sup> September 1986.

<sup>29</sup> See the video with her interview by Soteria International at <http://soteriainternational.org/en/misa-case/202-declaration-of-the-alleged-injured-part-in-the-process-of-bivolaru.html> (17'02")

<sup>30</sup> The Supreme Court of Sweden organized the hearing of M.D. and other people in Stockholm in the framework of the analysis of Romania's request to deport Bivolaru back to Bucharest. The Supreme Court refused and granted him political asylum. Since then, there has not been any complaint against him in Sweden.

<sup>31</sup> Stressed and terrified, M.D., then a minor, was interrogated outside the presence of her lawyer and her family.

have been 4-5 hours. On the day after, she accompanied her lawyer to the Prosecution Authority in order to take back her report but her new report was not attached to the documents of the file.

Soon afterwards, the media showed pictures of her, her boyfriend, her family, her school certificate and even her private diary, some material that had been confiscated by the law enforcement forces and probably leaked to journalists.

More than two weeks after the police raid, M.D. was forcibly taken to the Forensic Institute in Bucharest to have a vaginal and anal examination. She and her lawyer “sat locked up for four hours and thereafter her counsel was maltreated in a car by special police force before being separated from her client.”<sup>32</sup>

Is the accusation of sexual abuse of a minor founded? *HRWF Int’l* investigated the probability of such a crime.

In 2002, M.D. started to get interested in yoga, also because of the yoga camps that were organized in Costinesti, on the Black Sea, where she lived and where she had made friends with many yoga practitioners. Her parents did not disagree about her choice but her sister did because she had read negative articles about MISA in the printed press. In the winter of 2002/2003 she moved to Bucharest to study at the High School of Economics. At a winter holiday party she met R.L. who soon became her boy-friend and they began to live together in February 2003. They have been in partnership relationship until now, waiting for the Court proceedings to be over, hoping to have a clean start with their life. She was never a yoga student of Gregorian Bivolaru. She first saw him from distance at the annual MISA yoga camp in Costinesti in 2002 which was attended by thousands of people and later on she met him during his public conferences and during social events attended by many. M.D. confirmed to *HRWF Int’l* in the presence of her boy-friend that she never had sexual intercourse with Bivolaru. At the time of the alleged sexual abuse, Gregorian Bivolaru had a love relationship with a woman living in the same building as M.D.

According to the Romanian authorities, they had found out through telephone tapping of the telephone of Gregorian Bivolaru<sup>33</sup> that he had abused her sexually between 2002 and 2004. It would therefore be difficult to understand why the police let the alleged crime of sexual abuse continue and did not indict Bivolaru earlier. It was also assumed by the Prosecutor’s Office that M.D. had retracted upon pressure from persons around Bivolaru, but this was never proved and M.D. denied it. Moreover, she withdrew her statement and made a new one

---

<sup>32</sup> Excerpt from the decision of the Supreme Court of Sweden.

<sup>33</sup> Her lawyer, attorney Adina Solomon, declared to *HRWF Int’l* on 10<sup>th</sup> May 2013 that telephone tapping was illegal. According to her, warrants for phone calls tapping are authorized on the basis of Law no. 51/1991 on national security while Bivolaru was prosecuted for common law offenses. Moreover, the defence lawyer of Bivolaru said to have obtained from S.C. Vodafone S.A. that the phone number allegedly used by Bivolaru was actually a card in the subscription system on the name of Visterneanu Lacarmioara, a yoga practitioner, and the second phone number allegedly used by M.D. was a prepaid card which does not identify the person who used it.

- which was disregarded - with the help of a lawyer after the night of 18-19 March, only twelve hours later.

### ***Analysis of the violations of M.D.'s human rights***

Among the abuse committed by authorities in the MISA case, one was especially serious: the inhuman and degrading treatment to which M.D., a 17-year-old minor, was subjected. Although she was nothing more than a witness in the trial against Gregorian Bivolaru, she was treated like a criminal. She was deprived of freedom, subjected to pressure and violence because she wanted to change her previous statement obtained under coercion in order to incriminate Gregorian Bivolaru, founder of MISA. On 1<sup>st</sup> April 2004, she was taken by force to the Forensic Institute, where she was supposed to undergo a gynecological examination, although she had categorically refused it. The minor was surrounded by policemen and gendarmes all the time, and separated from her lawyer, whom she was unable to contact from that moment on. She was isolated from her colleagues and fiancé.

The Child Protection Commission decided on 7<sup>th</sup> April to place M.D. under the care of her sister. The measure was taken against the girl's will. The minor was forced to stay with her sister's family, unable to go anywhere by herself or to meet anyone until she managed to escape. The underage girl was prevented to go to school, contact her legal counsel and file complaints against those who infringed upon her rights and freedoms.

Over the last 9 years, M.D. was summoned many times to court hearings. "My life has been completely destroyed by the Romanian judicial system and the media," she told *HRWF Int'l*. During the whole interview, she was indeed overwhelmed by uncontrollable emotions and looked quite traumatized by this never-ending experience.

### **D.C kidnapped by her parents and forcibly interned in a psychiatric hospital<sup>34</sup>**

D.C started yoga at the age of 16. Her parents did not object to it until the media started demonizing the MISA yoga schools. She was 19 – not a minor any more - when her parents forcibly took her to a psychiatric hospital in Iasi-Socola because she was practicing yoga and stopped eating meat. For ten days, she was submitted to a wide range of tests but the doctors did not detect any psychological or mental problem and did not give her any treatment. When she was released, her parents confiscated her ID. A few months later, she decided to go to Bucharest to continue her studies. There she met A.M.C., a yoga practitioner, who was to become her husband later on.

One year later, on 19<sup>th</sup> January 2005, she went to Bârlad city hall with her fiancé to pick up a duplicate birth certificate from the civil status service. The paper was necessary for their marriage and for signing-up at the University in Bucharest.

---

<sup>34</sup> D.C was interviewed by HRWF Int'l in Bucharest on 10<sup>th</sup> May 2013.

When they arrived at the town hall, she was suddenly surrounded by her parents, her brother and another woman. Her mother convinced her to speak to her outside the building before picking up her birth certificate. In front of the building were also her paternal grandparents along with a blond man. Once they were on the street, they all changed their attitude toward her: they cursed her and behaved aggressively, being very upset that she was practicing yoga in MISA and she wanted to get married with A.M.C.

The grandfather together with her brother slammed her fiancé to the ground and started to beat him. During this time, the father and the mother pushed her with extreme violence into their car. She was all the time unable to act and defend herself.

She tried to escape and yelled for help at people around but in vain. She was then forcibly taken away to her maternal grandparents in the village of Asău, Bacău County. There they stripped her, took off her clothes and gave her old ones. They also took her boots and gave her old slippers. Her personal money and identity card were taken away from her. She was constantly threatened and kept in a state of strong emotional tension. She was under constant surveillance, even when going to the toilet. Her mother took unpaid leave to stay permanently with her and watch her. She slept in the same bed with her at night. During this period the tension to which she was subjected, threats, surveillance and isolation, created an unbearable sufferance for her.

On 3<sup>rd</sup> February 2005 her parents requested the intervention and collaboration of a psychiatrist and they forcibly took her to Nifon-Acuți Psychiatric Hospital, near Buzău. Their objective was to prevent her from attending the MISA yoga classes and to permanently separate her from her fiancé that she wanted to marry.

When she entered the hospital, the nurse at the doctor's office was already completing the necessary formalities for her internment, without even having been examined by the doctor and without her expressing agreement. She did not want to be hospitalized and told the nurse. She replied: *“Never mind, you will remain here for a few weeks and quiet down”* and the then hospital director interned her against her will (*violation of the Code of Medical Ethics, Law on the profession of physician 306/2004 and Law nr.487/2002*).

D.C.'s forcible internment lasted for 8 weeks. Since the first day she was given Leponex (Clozaril or Clozapine<sup>35</sup>) three times per day - a drug with powerful effects that is

---

<sup>35</sup> **Clozapine** is an atypical antipsychotic medication used in the treatment of schizophrenia and is also sometimes used off-label for the treatment of bipolar disorder. It was first introduced in Europe in 1971 but was voluntarily withdrawn by the manufacturer in 1975 after it was shown to cause agranulocytosis, a condition involving a dangerous decrease in the number of white blood cells that led to death in some patients. In 1989 after studies demonstrated that it was effective in treating treatment-resistant schizophrenia, the United States Food and Drug Administration (FDA) approved the use of clozapine solely for that purpose, requiring regular white blood cell and absolute neutrophil counts. In 2002 the FDA approved clozapine for reducing the risk of suicidal behaviour for patients with schizophrenia.

Clozapine is usually used as a last resort for patients that have not responded to other anti-psychotic treatments due to its danger of causing agranulocytosis as well as the costs of having to have blood tests continually during treatment. Patients are to be monitored weekly for the first six months. If there are no low counts the patient can be monitored every two weeks for an additional six months. Afterwards, the patient

administered in very advanced stages of schizophrenia - although she was never diagnosed with this illness by any medic and never had manifestations in this respect. A nurse asked her to sign a paper but under the effect of the drug treatment, she did not know what she signed.

D.C. did not agree with her hospitalization at any time. She lived moments of paralyzing fear and could not in any way oppose this inhumane and illegal deprivation of freedom.

She was unable to run away because the hospital (a former monastery) is located in a forest at about 40 km from Buzau and there was no transportation means, except a minibus for the medical staff. She had no clothes and no identity papers; she was surrounded by her parents, grandparents, doctors, nurses who were all determined to keep her in the hospital against her will. Clozapine therapy was administered during the whole duration of her confinement. The effects of this treatment consisted in dizziness and very strong headaches, nausea, very marked drowsiness, more than 12 hours sleep per day, constipation and urinary incontinence. She could not control her movements, could not move alone, had unbearable nausea, felt like a "vegetable". During sleep, Clozapine provoked a strong salivation. Also, after treatment she gained over 15kg, had greatly decreased immunity, prolonged menstrual bleeding and was told that for one year she would not be able to procreate.

D.C. told *HRWF Int'l* that the head of the hospital personally administered her treatment morning, noon and night. He was assisted by nurses who forced her to open her mouth, lift the tongue and did a finger check whether she was not hiding the pill. There was no way to avoid taking the drugs.

After eight weeks of hospitalization in Nifon hospital, her mother and father took her, also without her consent, back to her maternal grandparents in the village of Asău. Her mother continued to take unpaid leave, slept with her in bed, watched her permanently and continued to administer Clozapine. During this time D.C. was unable to contact her fiancé or another person who could have saved her. She was unlawfully deprived of freedom for an additional period of approximately 9 months. Later on, D.C. found out that during these 9 months of unlawful confinement she received a huge amount of letters and parcels from her fiancé and friends, which were confiscated and hidden away by her family.

On 10<sup>th</sup> October 2005 she managed to escape with the help of her fiancé and some friends.

Soon after that, D.C. finally got married and resumed her university courses at the Faculty of Law in Bucharest. The conflict with her family has still not attenuated to this day.

### **P. I.: A medical assistant dismissed from the army**

When P.I. started to attend yoga classes in 1992, this did not pose any problems. However, beginning in 1995, P.I., a military officer, was put under investigation by his superiors. It was then stated that there was no incompatibility between his practice, his professional life as a

---

may qualify for every four-week monitoring. Clozapine has numerous severe side effects including agranulocytosis, bowel infarction and seizures. Additionally, it also often causes less serious side effects such as hypersalivation and weight gain. (Source: Wikipedia)

military officer<sup>36</sup> and his private life; however, he was ostracized by his colleagues and discriminated against because of his way of life (no alcohol, no cigarettes, no drugs and his lacto-vegetarian regime).

On 1<sup>st</sup> April 2004, his girl-friend asked him to pick her up at the place of a demonstration of yoga practitioners against the 18<sup>th</sup> March raid. He was stopped there by special troops (anti-terrorist unit, gendarmerie and police), arrested, beaten up, forced into a van, insulted, threatened and taken to the police station. There he got an administrative fine on the ground of disturbance of public order for yelling on the street. When they realized he was an active military officer, they called the military police.

Despite the fact that the fine was cancelled by the 4<sup>th</sup> District Court of Law of Bucharest and it was acknowledged that he had not participated in the demonstration, a disciplinary procedure was initiated by the army. Without any possibility to defend himself or with the help of a lawyer, he was told by the Council of Honour of his military that he had brought serious damage to the dignity and honour of the military. He was dismissed and was not allowed to benefit from the unemployment fund because his sentence was mentioning “he had seriously violated the provisions of the military regulations.”

P.I. addressed a complaint to the Council for the Fight against Discrimination which confirmed he had been illegally dismissed. P.I. started judicial proceedings against the army to get financial compensation for his dismissal. Nine years later, he is still waiting for a final decision of the judiciary.

Unable to find another job, he enrolled at the Faculty of Physical Training in Bucharest. His parents took a bank credit to finance his new studies for four years and he is reimbursing them with his income of assistant professor at the Spiru Haret University in Bucharest.

### **L.S.F.: A judge forced to resign**

After graduating from the Law Faculty of the Bucharest University, L.S.F. worked as a prosecutor (1994-1996), a lawyer and a judge (2001-2004). She also authored several papers published in various criminology magazines. She was also interested in other religions and in Bivolaru's teachings. She was and still is Orthodox, as she does not see any incompatibility with yoga.

She first got to know him in 1994 when he was attacked in a vacation villa in Costinesti at the seaside and beaten by some hooligans because of his yoga activities<sup>37</sup>.

---

<sup>36</sup> The qualifications he received from 1994 to 2003 were: 1994 (very good), 1995 (good), 1996 (very good), 1997-1998 (good), 1999-2003 (very good). Source: Evidence attached to P.I.'s complaint to the Council for the Fight against Discrimination.

<sup>37</sup> L.S.F. told HRWF Int'l on 9<sup>th</sup> May 2013 that those hooligans were paid by a mafia leader in Bucharest having good relations with the SRI.

When a warrant was to be issued for the 18<sup>th</sup> March 2004 crackdown and the arrest of Bivolaru, she was close to the judicial authorities who were to take this decision.

The SRI (secret police) then decided she had to leave her position. During an interrogation, she realized she had been under their surveillance for ten years when her demands to participate in some conferences of Bivolaru between 1994 and 1998 were pushed under her nose. Attached to her dossier was also a photo of her on the beach that had mysteriously disappeared from her house although there had been no trace of burglary.

L.S.F. suddenly became the target of rumours in the media. She was accused of having played in an adults movie in Denmark. Pictures were published, identifying her as “the porn judge”. This campaign lasted for several months. The more she denied the allegations the more the media amplified “the scandal”. She was denigrated in TV shows and in more than 200 newspaper articles. The attacks were so virulent that she decided to resign after ten years spent in the magistracy.

After she left her position, she provided legal assistance to hundreds of MISA yoga schools practitioners who were victims of discrimination. She is now a self-employed mediator but the media continue to haunt her in her attempted new life.

### **G.L.: A policeman forced to resign**

G.L. graduated from the School of Police Sub-Officers “Vasile Lascar” in Slatina in 1994-1995. He occupied several positions in the police for about ten years.

On 5<sup>th</sup> May 2004, he was called to the office of the Head of the General Inspectorate of Romanian Police (IGPR)<sup>38</sup>. He accused him of being a member of MISA and ordered him to resign because it was incompatible with his position. G.L. answered he had indeed been practising yoga for ten years, but was not a member of MISA. He reminded his interrogators that he had always received a very good report from his superiors. He also stressed that the Policeman Statute allows policemen to be affiliated to any non-governmental, humanitarian, scientific, religious or sport organization as long as it does not prejudice the job assignments.

From colleagues, G.L. learnt later that all the police stations had received a circular letter from the ministry saying that he and another colleague based in Cluj were to quit and that any other policeman practising yoga in MISA should be expelled unless they give up their yoga classes.

The pressure at G.L.’s workplace was so intense that he could no longer bear it and left his job.

---

<sup>38</sup> In 2005, that high-ranking officer was accused of having been involved in the transportation and cremation of the corpses of 40 opponents to Ceausescu’s regime in Timisoara in December 1989. He was sacked and *Evenimentul Zilei* newspaper titled its issue no. 3979, 21<sup>st</sup> January 2005 “Nastase’s Police Beheaded”.

## **I.E.P.: Renting contract of an artist illegally cancelled**

I.E.P. graduated from the Academy of Theatre and Film in Bucharest in 1994. He is licensed in the art of acting. He played in many Romanian theatres: Odeon Theatre, Majestic Bucharest, Bucharest National Theatre, Theatre LS Bulandra Bucharest and so on. He won many prizes in the 1980s and 1990s. In 1992, he participated in the world's largest theatre festival in Edinburgh, where he was accompanied by then Minister of Culture, Ion Caramitru. In 1993, he was selected among hundreds of other actors to represent Romania at an EU sponsored theatre festival in Montpellier (France). He took part in countless other artistic tours in Romania and abroad: Morocco, Turkey, Moldova, Hungary, South Korea and other countries. He organized workshops in the Czech Republic, Denmark, Germany, Mexico and the United States.

His problems started when it was made known he was a MISA yoga practitioner.

In 1996, he wanted to rent a room in a Bucharest theatre for an event when he was suddenly informed that the municipal council had sent a letter to the managers of all the theatres saying they should not rent their premises to a yoga school or yoga practitioners.

In 2009, I.E.P. made an oral agreement with the European Studies Centre near the town of Sf. Gheorghe to organize workshops entitled "SiddhaArta" between 28<sup>th</sup> December 2009 and 3<sup>rd</sup> January 2010. In November, three weeks before the event, a former MISA yoga practitioner<sup>39</sup> and detractor of Gregorian Bivolaru sent numerous clippings from Romanian tabloids to the managers of the Centre in an effort to denigrate I.E.P.'s project. The workshops were cancelled and the money that had been invested could not be recovered.

Afterwards, the same detractor tried again on several occasions to have his shows cancelled, notably at the House of Culture of Oradea, but I.E.P. had by then been cautious enough to have a written agreement providing that if either party changed their minds, they would have to pay 10,000 EUR.

## **Conclusion**

The long judicial harassment of Gregorian Bivolaru on numerous charges, the questionable proceedings and the conduct of many Romanian media outlets are a matter of grave concern for *HRWF Int'l*. The problems faced by MISA yoga practitioners over the past nine years have indeed been provoked by an escalating social panic on television, on the radio and in the printed press.

*HRWF Int'l* urges the Romanian media to adopt a stronger ethic of responsible journalism, promoting independence in its reporting and conscientious in its duty to protect individuals from defamation while working in the overall public interest.

---

<sup>39</sup> This woman is regularly interviewed by the media in Romania and abroad. She attributes the failure of her marriage many years ago to the teachings of Gregorian Bivolaru about sexuality.

On 14 June 2013 Gregorian Bivolaru, who in 2005 received political asylum in Sweden, was sentenced to 6 years in prison on only one charge. All other charges were dismissed. This is the Romanian judicial truth. Readers of this report are urged to draw their own conclusions.

The case will be appealed at the European Court of Human Rights in Strasbourg.