

---

## **THOUSANDS CONTINUE PROTESTS AGAINST GOVERNMENT IN ROMANIA**

- 13.02.2017

---

Reuters (12 February 2017)

Thousands of Romanians protested in Bucharest and other cities on Sunday against the Social Democrat government that tried to weaken a crackdown on corruption earlier this month.

The one-month-old cabinet of Prime Minister Sorin Grindeanu enraged voters when it quietly approved late on Jan. 31 an emergency decree that would have decriminalized several graft offenses.

The decree, which was widely criticized in Romania and by its Western allies, prompted the largest display of popular anger since the fall of communism in 1989, with at least half a million people taking to the streets last Sunday.

The government was forced to rescind the decree, and its architect, Justice Minister Florin Iordache resigned, citing a need to appease public opinion but arguing he had done nothing wrong.

But even after the degree was withdrawn, rallies have continued throughout the week, with protesters demanding the resignation of a government they say they cannot trust.

In Bucharest on Sunday, at least 50,000 people gathered outside the government's headquarters, carrying banners that said "Resist" and chanting "We want to work, not guard you". At 1900 GMT they raised pieces of red, yellow and blue colored paper above their heads to form a giant Romanian flag. Tens of thousands protested in other Romanian cities and abroad.

"The feeling in the street is that there hasn't been closure," said Catalin Tenita, 39, an IT entrepreneur who co-founded Geeks for Democracy, an online platform that aims to connect IT experts, designers and others for projects that would improve governance.

"We're in a situation where the government is consuming social resources just because they wouldn't admit they have done something wrong."

Parliament, where the ruling coalition holds a big majority, must still vote on whether to confirm the decrees withdrawal.

On Friday, Social Democrat leader and lower house speaker Liviu Dragnea said parliament should meet to approve the withdrawal as soon as possible.

Dragnea, who is on trial in an abuse of power case and who would have benefited from the decree, has urged allowing the government to implement a program of wage and pension increases that helped the Social Democrats win the Dec. 11 election.

Interim Justice Minister Ana Birchall has said she plans to meet the top magistrates council, chief prosecutors and other members of the judiciary on Monday to discuss changes to the criminal code.

Premier Grindeanu has said the decree was rescinded in the interests of social unity. He then appointed earlier this week a vice president of the states food safety authority who is under investigation by anti-corruption prosecutors for 19 counts of bribe taking. Grindeanu dismissed her one day later.

(Reporting by Luiza Ilie, editing by Larry King)

Photo: Protesters display the Romanian national flag colours during a demonstration in front of the government building in Bucharest, Romania, February 12, 2017. Inquam Photos/Liviu Florin Albei via REUTERS

<http://www.reuters.com/article/us-romania-government-protests-idUSKBN15R0ZB>

---

Kaynak/Source: