
ROMANIAN PRESIDENT REJECTS GOVERNMENT CALL TO SACK TOP ANTI-GRAFT PROSECUTOR

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The anti-corruption prosecution agency, the DNA, has earned the praise of the European Commission for its efforts under Laura Codruta Kovesi to tackle high-level sleaze in Romania.

But Justice Minister Tudorel Toader has accused Kovesi of exceeding her authority and damaging Romanias image abroad. He launched a legal bid in February to have her sacked, in a move that sparked renewed street protests by anti-graft campaigners.

(The ministers) arguments for a revocation did not convince me, Iohannis, a centrist often at odds with the leftist-led government, told reporters after his advisers had examined Toaders request.

Most of the reasons do not even meet the legal provisions, said Iohannis, who has often praised the DNAs work.

Romanias judicial watchdog has also spoken out against dismissing Kovesi.

Responding to the presidents announcement, Toader said on his Facebook page that the government would appeal to the Constitutional Court. He did not say when it would act.

DNA sent roughly 1,000 people to trial last year, Kovesi has said, including three ministers, six lawmakers and two deputy ministers. A third of the defendants were accused of committing fraud with European Union funds.

At the same time, DNA prosecutors won 713 convictions, including for four lawmakers, 28 mayors and 30 managers of state institutions and companies. Some trials were years old.

Investigations have shown some public works contracts are overpriced and some payments are made for fictitious works.

Transparency International ranks Romania among the EUs most corrupt states and Brussels keeps its justice system under special monitoring.

<https://www.reuters.com/article/us-romania-corruption/romanian-president-rejects-government-call-to-sack-top-anti-graft-prosecutor-idUSKBN1HN24R?il=0>