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GOVT SUPPORTERS STAGE RALLY AGAINST ANTI-CORRUPTION 'ABUSES' IN ROMANIA

- 12.06.2018

TRT World (10 June 2018)

More than 100,000 supporters of the Romanian government assembled in the capital dressed in white Saturday to protest alleged abuses committed by anti-corruption prosecutors.

The governing Social Democratic Party thinks the prosecutors have too much power and allege they have tapped phones illegally and unjustly targeted officials.

The party bussed in supporters from around the country for the rally, while others made it on their own.

"Romania didn't invent corruption," Oana Florea, 42, a legal expert from Bucharest, said. "A lot of it has been exaggerated, as there have been acquittals."

Last year, Romania had its biggest protests since communism ended after the government tried to decriminalise official misconduct.

The office of the anti-corruption prosecutor successfully prosecuted 713 officials in 2016, including 28 mayors and a senator.

Critics say the government rally is designed to intimidate judges and Romanian President Klaus Iohannis, who supports the anti-corruption fight.

Several participants in Saturday's rally said they think their phones have been tapped, as they were during Romania's more than four decades of communist rule.

Bucharest Mayor Gabriela Firea told the crowd the rally was organised "to defend dignity and freedom."

Firea alleged that anti-government demonstrators who have protested against high-level corruption regularly were "paid" to rally "against our interests."

But Calin Marius Cosmin, 23, a Social Democratic Party member who picks tomatoes and corn and came from the eastern city of Tulcea, appeared more concerned about the economy than politics.

"We want more jobs, better-paid jobs, better roads," he said.

<https://www.trtworld.com/europe/govt-supporters-stage-rally-against-anti-corruption-abuses-in-romania-18107>

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