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## **THOUSANDS PROTEST ROMANIA DILUTING FIGHT AGAINST CORRUPTION**

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The Washington Post (20 June 2018)

Anti-government protesters in Romania who are angry about new legislation they say will facilitate high-level corruption briefly scuffled Wednesday with police, who detained a German journalist.

Thousands of people assembled outside government offices waving Romanian, American and European Union flags and calling the countrys ruling Social Democratic Party the red plague. Noisy protesters also gained access to the Parliament building, escorted by lawmakers from the opposition Save Romanian Union party.

The protests in Romanias capital, Bucharest, came in response to the approval lawmakers gave late Monday to revised criminal justice statutes that critics have called a setback to prosecuting corruption. Smaller protests also took place in cities such as Brasov, Sibiu, Cluj, Timisoara and Iasi.

Later Wednesday, police were seen detaining a number of people, including German journalist Paul Arne Wagner. The company where he is director, Passport Productions, said Wagner was taken into custody. Wagner has been covering the months of anti-corruption protests in Romania. No further details were available.

Protesters made a point Wednesday of sitting outside the office of Liviu Dragnea, the leader of the Social Democrats. Dragnea cant be prime minister due to a 2016 conviction for vote-rigging. A verdict is expected Thursday in his official misconduct trial. Dragnea denies wrongdoing and declined to comment on the protests.

Also Wednesday, a Romanian court sentenced former Transportation Minister Dan Sova to three years in prison for influence peddling. Prosecutors said Sova was paid 100,000 euros (\$116,000) to persuade the manager of a state-owned heating company to illegally sign a three-year contract with a specific legal firm, bypassing internal company rules.

Romanian Premier Viorica Dancila was making a speech to parliament about Romanias upcoming presidency of the European Union when the protesters entered the building.

Laws are voted late at night to protect tax evaders and corrupt people, one protester, Stefan Gugui, a 50-year-old recruitment consultant, said. The country needs to come to its senses.

[https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/europe/romania-protesters-stage-demo-in-parliament-building/2018/06/20/6316e330-748c-11e8-bda1-18e53a448a14\\_story.html?utm\\_term=.1b17d6578541](https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/europe/romania-protesters-stage-demo-in-parliament-building/2018/06/20/6316e330-748c-11e8-bda1-18e53a448a14_story.html?utm_term=.1b17d6578541)

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