







# Weekly Briefing

**Romania Political briefing:**  
**Massive protest in Bucharest against the Government ended in**  
**violence**  
**Oana Cristina Popovici**

## China-CEE Institute

Kiadó: Kína-KKE Intézet Nonprofit Kft.  
Szerkesztésért felelős személy: Chen Xin  
Kiadásért felelős személy: Huang Ping

 1052 Budapest Petőfi Sándor utca 11.  
 +36 1 5858 690  
 [office@china-cee.eu](mailto:office@china-cee.eu)  
 [china-cee.eu](http://china-cee.eu)

## **Massive protest in Bucharest against the Government ended in violence**

*Another massive protest against the Government took place on the 10<sup>th</sup> August in Bucharest and in several other cities in the countries, with the large participation of Romanian diaspora. For the first time since such events took place, the mass meeting ended with a brutal police crackdown, which led to the injury of several people. One month after the violent intervention of the police, it is not yet decided who is responsible for the order to brutally evacuate the protesters. Moreover, the incident from August 10<sup>th</sup> became a subject of intense political disputes between the opposition and the governing parties, but also caused destabilizations within the governing party, as the mayor of Bucharest is publicly blaming the minister of Interior for the actions took against the people.*

A massive protest was established and took place on the 10<sup>th</sup> of August against the Government, with the substantial participation of Romanians living outside the country. Initially, the organisers notified that around one million participants will gather, in a mass meeting supposed to be a reference one, after regular similar manifestations during the past months since the Social Democratic Party (SDP) came to power.

The aim of the protest was to object to the way Romania is governed (especially due to the controversial decisions related to the justice, which affect the anticorruption efforts), to ask for the resignation of the Government and to require early elections. More than 100,000 persons took to the streets, altogether in Bucharest and in other cities of the country. As compared to other events in this category, this time the protest in Bucharest, were the largest group of people protested in front of the building of the Government, in the Victoriei Square, ended with a brutal police crackdown, which led to the injury of several people. Both protesters and observers consider that the intervention was more brutal

than needed. According to one of the representatives of the police, approximately 1,000 gendarmes were present at protest, including the reinforcements requested from other regions of the country. There is not clear yet who is responsible for deciding the intervention of the force orders and which responsibility had each institution involved in the management of the situation.

It seems that the violence started since the beginning of the protest, because the Gendarmerie did not want to widen the protest perimeter. After that, while the most part of the population protested peacefully, groups of stirrers infiltrated among protesters threw objects to the gendarmes and tried to break through the police cordon, which draw the repressions with pepper spray, water cannons and teargas, thus affecting a large part of the crowd. Such equipment has been brought to other protests, but it has not been used. As a consequence, 450 people were hurt and 30 policemen were injured.

The first reaction of the President Klaus Iohannis in the same night was to condemn the intervention of the police, considering it as “brutal” and “strongly disproportionate to the manifestations of most people” or “a try of defeating people's will”. The lack of reaction of the Government was due to the fact the Prime-Minister and several other ministers were on vacation; still, the minister of Interior also had no intervention or explanation. The general suspicion is that several groups of instigators were sent among the peaceful protesters, but these issues remains to be elucidated by the institutions that have authority in such problems.

Immediately after the protest, the military prosecutors opened a criminal case regarding the violent intervention of the police. The main interest is to check if the gendarmes who intervened to the protest of the diaspora are guilty of abuse of service and abusive behaviour. Their investigation is based on the photos and videos of the victims and of the witnesses, the documents from the institutions who had representatives at the place of the protest and criminal complaints lodged at police stations. The military prosecutors at the General

Prosecutor's Office have reported more than 770 complaints by protesters against gendarmes, and investigations are in progress for identifying the individuals involved in violent incidents at the protest.

One month after the protest, it is not yet decided who gave the order to evacuate the Victory Square, the location where the protests took place. The responsibility is discarded between the prefect of Bucharest and the minister of Interior, namely the representatives of the Gendarmerie. Recently, the mayor of Bucharest who is part of the governing party has publicly defended the prefect, who counted the order to evacuate the Victory Square, and pointed out that the minister of Interior is politically responsible for the gendarmerie's intervention in force. She stated that the order signed by the prefect on August 10<sup>th</sup> does not contain any interference with water or gas cannons on the population.

The position of the minister of Interior is that the gendarmes acted in accordance with their obligations, but she admits, however, that serious misconduct has also been detected. In this context, 10 gendarmes who have been reported as potential authors of criminal offenses will be investigated in 6 cases of violence by the Military Prosecutor's Office, at the notification of the Romanian Gendarmerie.

One week after the protests, the Prime-Minister Viorica Dancila sent a letter to the European Commission President Jean-Claude Juncker and First Vice-President Frans Timmermans complaining that the August 10<sup>th</sup> protest was an attempt to violently remove the Government and accused that the president Klaus Iohannis has failed to fulfil his constitutional powers as mediator, and has furthermore called for continued protests. While the European Commission confirmed the receipt of the letter, it did not provide an answer yet.

Until now, the Government seemed reluctant in transmitting the requested reports related to the events from the 10<sup>th</sup> of August. The president of the Senate Defence Commission mentioned that the minister did not submit the Minister of Interior's Report on the abuses of 10 August, which was formally requested as

of August 24<sup>th</sup>, against this background of contradictory statements about the signed order for the repression of protesters.

During the investigation that is carried out for establishing the thread of events and those who are guilty for the violence, the prosecutors will also hear the declarations of the Prime Minister Viorica Dancila, who would have to make clarifications about the terms in which she described the situation in Romania in the official letter sent to the European Commission for explaining the situation. On the list of those that are going to be heard are the mayor of Bucharest and the minister of Interior.

The start, at the beginning of this week, of the parliamentary session seemed to be directed towards accelerating the rhythm of investigations. Both parties of the opposition announced the deposition of a censure motion in which the dismissal of the minister of Interior is requested as a result of the disorderly command of the police and the fact that the authorities have seriously violated the law and brutally repressed a peaceful demonstration. In addition, the two opposition parties announced that will request the set-up of an inquiry commission on the repression of the demonstration that took place on August 10<sup>th</sup> and asked for the presence of the Prime Minister in the plenary of the Chamber of Deputies for justifying the responsibilities of its subordinates within the Government and the Prefecture, the Gendarmerie and other similar institutions as a result of brutal intervention in the suppression of the 10 August demonstration.

Still, among the first decision taken, the Members of the Parliament from the Government Party in the Chamber of Deputies rejected the establishment of the investigative commission on the repression of the anti-government protest held from Victoriei Square. However, later in September, the Minister of Interior, the chief of the Romanian Special Gendarmerie Brigade, People's Advocate and the leadership of the Romanian Institute for Human Rights will attend the Human Rights Commission of the Chamber of Deputies. The aim of the committee's members is to determine whether the protests organized on 10

August respected citizens' rights and freedoms. In addition, the European Parliament's plenary will hold a debate on the violence at the protest in Bucharest at the beginning of October and it is not yet established whether a resolution will be adopted after the debate.

Several external reactions drew the attention on the violent confrontations. The German Foreign Minister Heiko Maas said Europe is concerned about the political and social confrontations in Romania, whose hardness culminated in violent confrontations. He presented the support of the German Federal Government in consolidating the rule of law, and proposed that the honest intermediaries and internationally recognized experts to be taken into account in solving Romania's problems. Several non-governmental organizations condemned the unjustified violence, the lack of professionalism and the ill-will demonstrated by the forces of order and have publicly demanded the resignation of the prefect of the Capital and the minister of the Interior, considered the main responsible for the violence in Victory Square.

One month after the protests in August, on the 10th of September, a new protest is announced all over the country, for continuing to demonstrate against the Government and for drawing the attention that despite unjustified violence, the authorities did not find any guilty for the aggressions of the gendarmerie.