

ROMANIA: Leading businessman Dan Adamescu dies in prison

Leading Romanian businessman Dan Adamescu has become the latest victim of Romania's "failing" penal and judicial system.

By Martin Banks

Eurereporter (25.01.2017) – <http://bit.ly/2kvVWX2> – Adamescu was serving a four year sentence for alleged bribery but had been seriously ill for some time and died in a hospital in Bucharest, aged 68.

A leading campaign group says Adamescu should have been released from prison both on health and age grounds and the case highlights a "total breakdown in the rule of law" in the country.

Willy Fautre, director of the Brussels-based NGO Human Rights Without Frontiers (HRWF), says the EU has an important role in such matters and should "closely monitor" the situation in Romania.

He told this website: "This is not an isolated case. I was in Romania last week and personally saw the huge public demonstrations about this issue."

Adamescu, whose fortune was estimated by Forbes at €550m, had asked judges in late 2016 to let him get out of jail sooner because of his age and due to the fact that he was already investigated while in preventive arrest. However, the court rejected his request.

A German citizen of Romanian origin, he founded the Nova Group

(TNG), which holds stakes in Romanian real estate like the InterContinental Hotel Bucharest and Unirea Shopping Centre.

In May 2014, he was imprisoned and sentenced to four years and four months on charges of bribery and corruption after what is widely seen as a show trial in February 2015. He vehemently denied the accusation and his family now say that the conditions in which he was held, and lack of medical care afforded to him, contributed to his death.

His son, Alexander Adamescu, has been fighting to clear his father's name, says he has also become a target for the Romanian authorities who are requesting his extradition and incarceration.

London-based Alexander said: "My sadness at this time is tinged with anger directed towards the Romanian state, whose persecution of my father caused his death. My father was vilified, haunted and assassinated to satisfy Romania's thirst for trophies in its ill-conceived anti-corruption mania. Now my turn has come to face the same fate. The trial and imprisonment on trumped-up charges left my father facing not only a justice system which blatantly failed to guarantee him a fair trial but also a prison system which is in breach of fundamental human rights."

Fautre, whose organization highlights human rights abuses around the world, said Adamescu's death while in detention "sheds once again some tragic light on the appalling prison conditions" in Romania which, he says, have been denounced "year after year" by the European Court of Human Rights.

He said "negative reports" on the state of the penal and judicial system in Romania have also been issued since 2013 by the Strasbourg-based Council of Europe's Committee of Prevention of Torture and the U.S State Department.

Similar concern has been expressed by Romania's Ombudsman in his 2015 report.

Fautre added: "Adamescu was known to be in very bad health but his requests for an early release were disregarded by the authorities. Prisons are overcrowded in Romania: eight of them have an occupancy rate of over 200%, and the average occupancy rate in local prisons is of some 150%."

If Romania does not solve the problems, the European Court of Human Rights has said it will rule that the country – a member of the European Union – must pay compensations to all inmates for each day of detention in improper conditions.

These compensations would amount to some € 80 million per year.

Fautre went on: "Given his condition, Adamescu should not have been kept in detention and our NGO considers that the EU should closely monitor the respect of fundamental human rights in Romania."

According to research, Romania is the European country with the highest number of its expats in prison in the EU (11,511).

In July 2016, prison protests spread across Romania as inmates expressed their dissatisfaction with poor conditions.

Romanian jails still fall below European standards, with overcrowding, inadequate medical attention and poor diet remain the main problems, according to activists. Its jails are said to still have inadequate hygiene conditions, with insufficient access to warm water, insufficient sanitary facilities, insufficient natural lighting and ventilation, and poor food quality.

A Council of Europe source said: "The Adamescu case illustrates the failing penal and judicial system in Romania."

Alexander Adamescu says that, despite his failing health, his father fought "injustices to the end".

He added: "As a family, we are determined to continue the

fight to make the truth know, restore his legacy and bring an end to the oppression of basic freedoms in Romania.”

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