

Mandates of the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights defenders and the Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of the right to freedom of opinion and expression

Ref.: AL ROU 1/2026

(Please use this reference in your reply)

25 February 2026

Excellency,

We have the honour to address you in our capacities as Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights defenders and Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of the right to freedom of opinion and expression, pursuant to Human Rights Council resolutions 52/4 and 52/9.

In this connection, we would like to bring to the attention of your Excellency's Government information we have received concerning **the continued harassment, acts of intimidation and threats against environmental human rights defender, Ms. Alina Chiriac in Ciurila, Cluj County.**

Ms. **Alina Chiriac** is an environmental human rights defender who has advocated for environmental protection in different regions of Romania for more than 16 years. She has publicly opposed and initiated strategic litigation against 'Ciurila PUG', an urban planning scheme which proposes to clear land in the Făget Forest area, including the EU protected Natura 2000 site. Through active citizen participation, she continues to raise public awareness on environmental violations in the Ciurila area.

According to the information received:

Since 2022, Ms. Chiriac has filed a series of petitions with local authorities, illustrating environmental risks posed by the 'Ciurila PUG' urban planning scheme and the planned A3 highway exit.

On 23 March 2022, Ms. Chiriac was assaulted and threatened by a neighbor in Pruniș village after submitting a request at Ciurila Mayor's Office for a public debate on the 'Ciurila PUG' scheme. Following the assault, she filed a complaint with police. On 18 April 2022, a police officer interviewed Ms. Chiriac and informed her that it was being recorded, in the presence of her lawyer. During the interview, the officer reportedly harassed and fined her for not having established her residence in Ciurila. This fine was subsequently annulled by Turda Court.

On 20 April 2022, the suspect in the criminal investigation was interviewed by the same police officer. This interview was also recorded. The suspect reportedly admitted to having committed the assault, that Ms. Chiriac was submitting too many petitions and that 'she should stop.'

On 12 May 2022, Ms. Chiriac requested access to her recorded interview. On 10 June 2022, Turda Prosecutor's Office informed her that no recorded footage could be identified. The criminal investigation was dismissed.

On 20 July 2022, Ms. Chiriac filed a disciplinary complaint against the police officer that interviewed her on 18 April 2022 for unprofessional conduct and inappropriate and intimidating behavior, to the Cluj County Police Inspectorate (IPJ). On 4 August 2022, Ms. Chiriac received a response stating that the Cluj County Police Inspectorate had not been able to identify violations of the Police Officer Statute.

On 6 August 2022, the police officer reportedly arrived in her village, questioned her neighbors about her presence there, lifestyle and civic activity, and told them that she was being ‘monitored’ by the authorities. As a result, neighbors asked the human rights defender to stop submitting complaints to the local authorities in connection with the environmental violations in their community.

On 29 June 2023, the police officer reportedly monitored Ms. Chiriac’s residence in Pruniş, followed her car and then stopped her. The officer fined her for a missing reflective triangle and undeclared scratch on her car.

On 30 June 2023, during a public debate on ‘Ciurila PUG’, involving various public authorities, Ms. Chiriac was verbally attacked and prevented from presenting her arguments and requests for the protection of the Făget Natura 2000 site and surrounding areas.

On 27 July 2023, Ms. Chiriac filed a petition with the National Anticorruption Directorate (DNA) detailing evidence of a prolonged pattern of intimidation and harassment and requesting protection measures. The National Anticorruption Directorate considered that the complaint was within the competence of Turda Prosecutor’s Office. Her complaint was sent to Turda Prosecutor’s Office for criminal investigation despite Ms. Chiriac’s concern about their impartiality in dealing with previous complaints.

On 20 February 2024, Ms. Chiriac received a fine for a Facebook post in which she contested the actions of local authorities in Ciurila. Specifically, the police accused Ms. Chiriac and the NGOs she is involved with of damaging the reputation of the Romanian police and fined her for contravention of article 2, point 1 of Law 61/1991. On 14 April 2025, the fine was definitively annulled by the Bucharest Tribunal.

In January 2025, Ms. Chiriac was notified that an investigation had been opened and was summoned for interview following the referral of her complaint to Turda Prosecutor’s Office in 2023. On 17 June 2025, Turda Prosecutor’s Office informed her of their decision not to prosecute.

On 18 December 2025, the Second Administrative and Fiscal Division of the Bucharest Tribunal ordered the suspension of ‘Ciurila PUG’ on the basis that the relevant authorities had failed to adequately assess its environmental impact. Ms. Chiriac initiated this case in 2024 through an NGO, which was filed against various authorities at local and county level. Since the ruling, Ms. Chiriac has reportedly faced an escalation in online harassment and threats of physical harm and legal action, including from local officials.

These alleged threats, acts of intimidation, harassment and attacks are part of a wider context in which those who have similarly challenged the legality of urban planning schemes like 'Ciurila PUG' in the area are silenced.

Without wishing to prejudge the accuracy of the information received, we renew our concern for the continued harassment, acts of intimidation and threats against Ms. Chiriac, which put her safety at risk, and urge immediate action by your Excellency's Government to follow up on the allegations and ensure her immediate and long-term safety. The prolonged pattern of harassment experienced by Ms. Chiriac appears to be directly related to her civic engagement in defense of environmental rights and to the exercise of her right to freedom of expression.

In connection with the above alleged facts and concerns, please refer to the **Annex on Reference to international human rights law** attached to this letter which cites international human rights instruments and standards relevant to these allegations.

As it is our responsibility, under the mandates provided to us by the Human Rights Council, to seek to clarify all cases brought to our attention, we would be grateful for your observations on the following matters:

1. Please provide any additional information and/or comment(s) you may have on the above-mentioned allegations.
2. Please provide information on any steps taken or that your Excellency's Government plans to undertake to guarantee the safety and physical integrity of Ms. Alina Chiriac in light of the above-detailed alleged threats. If no such steps have been taken, please explain how this is compatible with Romania's obligations under international human rights law (see Annex).
3. Please provide information on the status of any investigations into the abovementioned allegations and on measures undertaken to identify and sanction the perpetrators.
4. Please provide further information on what steps have been taken to ensure Ms. Alina Chiriac's right to an effective remedy and on any steps taken to ensure that human rights defenders in Romania are able to carry out their legitimate and protected work, in a safe and enabling environment, free from any physical, judicial or other forms of intimidation and harassment.

This communication, and any response received from your Excellency's Government, will be made public via the communications reporting [website](#) at the 60 days mark. Should Your Excellency's Government respond within 60 days, both the communication and the response, may be published before the 60 days mark. The communications and responses will also be made available in the subsequent periodic report to be presented to the Human Rights Council.

While awaiting a reply, we urge that all necessary interim measures be taken to halt the alleged violations and prevent their re-occurrence and in the event that the investigations support or suggest the allegations to be correct, to ensure the accountability of any person(s) responsible for the alleged violations.

We may publicly express our concerns in the near future as, in our view, the information upon which the press release will be based is sufficiently reliable to indicate a matter warranting immediate attention. We also believe that the wider public should be alerted to the potential implications of the above-mentioned allegations. The press release will indicate that we have been in contact with your Excellency's Government's to clarify the issue/s in question.

Please accept, Excellency, the assurances of our highest consideration.

Mary Lawlor

Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights defenders

Irene Khan

Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of the right to freedom of opinion and expression

Annex

Reference to international human rights law

In connection with above alleged facts and concerns, we would like to draw the attention of your Excellency's Government to the following human rights norms and standards.

We refer your Excellency's Government to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), which Romania acceded to on 23 March 1976, and in particular to article 2(3), article 9 and article 19, which guarantees the right to an effective remedy, right to security of person and the right to the freedom of expression.

In its general comment No. 31, the Human Rights Committee clarified that article 2(3) entails an obligation to conduct prompt, thorough, effective, independent and impartial investigations into alleged violations to ensure that those responsible are brought to justice (CCPR/C/21/Rev.1/Add.13, paras. 15, 18).

The right to security of person refers to protection against physical or psychological injury, or attacks on physical and moral integrity, and obliges State parties to take appropriate measures to protect individuals from foreseeable threats to their life or physical integrity from any State or non-State actor. As the Human Rights Committee has underlined, States parties should respond appropriately to patterns of violence against certain categories of victims, such as intimidation of human rights defenders, and should take appropriate measures to protect the victims of such violence (CCPR/GC/35 para. 9). Where individuals are exposed to repeated threats or acts of intimidation linked to the exercise of their rights, the obligation to ensure security of person requires timely and effective action by competent authorities.

Article 19 requires the States parties to guarantee the right to freedom of expression, including the right to seek, receive, and impart information and ideas of all kinds. As interpreted by the Human Rights Committee in general comment No. 34 (CCPR/C/GC/34), such information and ideas include, *inter alia*, political discourse, commentary on public affairs, discussion of human rights, and journalism (paragraph 11). Free press and other media should be able to comment on public issues without censorship or restraint and to inform public opinion, and the public has a corresponding right to receive media output (paragraph 13). States parties should recognize and respect that element of the right of freedom of expression that embraces the limited journalistic privilege not to disclose information sources (paragraph 45).

We would like to remind your Excellency's Government that any restrictions to the right to freedom of expression must meet the criteria established by international human rights standards, such as article 19(3) of the ICCPR. Under these standards, restrictions must be provided for by law and conform to the strict tests of necessity and proportionality. Article 19(3) may never be invoked to justify the muzzling of any advocacy of democratic tenets and human rights (paragraph 23). It is the States parties' duty to put in place effective measures to protect against attacks aimed at silencing those exercising their right to freedom of expression (Id.). All such attacks should be

vigorously investigated in a timely fashion, the perpetrators be prosecuted, and the victims receive appropriate forms of redress (Id.).

We also wish to refer to the fundamental principles set forth in the Declaration on the Right and Responsibility of Individuals, Groups and Organs of Society to Promote and Protect Universally Recognized Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms, also known as the UN Declaration on Human Rights Defenders, in particular, article 1, which states that everyone has the right, individually and in association with others, to promote and to strive for the protection and realization of human rights and fundamental freedoms at the national and international levels, and article 2, which provides that each State has a prime responsibility and duty to protect, promote and implement all human rights and fundamental freedoms, inter alia, by adopting such steps as may be necessary to create all conditions necessary in the social, economic, political and other fields, as well as the legal guarantees required to ensure that all persons under its jurisdiction, individually and in association with others, are able to enjoy all those rights and freedoms in practice.

We would further like to emphasise article 6(b) of the Declaration on Human Rights Defenders which holds that, everyone has the right, individually and in association with others, to freely to publish, impart or disseminate to others views, information and knowledge on all human rights and fundamental freedoms. Furthermore, article 8 of the Declaration on Human Rights Defenders holds that everyone has the right to participation in the government of his or her country and in the conduct of public affairs including the right to submit to governmental bodies concerned with public affairs criticism and proposals for improving their functioning and to draw attention to any aspect of their work that may hinder or impede the promotion, protection and realization of human rights and fundamental freedoms.

Furthermore, we wish to draw attention to article 9 of the Declaration on Human Rights Defenders, which holds that in the exercise of human rights and fundamental freedoms, including the promotion and protection of human rights as referred to in the Declaration, everyone has the right to benefit from an effective remedy and to be protected in the event of the violation of those rights, as well as to article 12 of the Declaration, which states that the State shall take all necessary measures to ensure the protection by the competent authorities of everyone exercising their rights under the Declaration against any violence, threats, retaliation, de facto or de jure adverse discrimination, pressure or any other arbitrary action.