

I want to dream and fly again

Collection of testimonies



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Edited by: Ludmila Popovici

*Collection of testimonies of beneficiaries RCTV Memoria
written by Ludmila Popovici*

*English translation: Victor Popovici
Editing English version: Anna Taylor, Daniela Cabral*

Cover photo: Daniela Cabral

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The
CENTER for
VICTIMS of
TORTURE



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FOREWORDS

*Vitalie Ciobanu,
Writer*



A LESSON OF SACRIFICE AND LOVE

The book you hold in your hands is a harrowing chronicle of shattered lives. It is the story of young adults aged not much more than eighteen, who were mangled in the cogs of the repressive machinery merely for being in the wrong place at the wrong time, at the height of dramatic events.-

On 7th of April 2009 Moldova seemed to go off the rails. And in the weeks that followed the whole country was turned into one vast prison camp of torture and humiliation, something inconceivable in the present day. Fortunately, the bullet missed by a hair`s breadth, democracy was saved in extremis, and national values and our European future were given a new breath of life, a new hope, thanks to the victory won by the anti-communist opposition in the elections of 29th of July 2009. But the repression left a long trail of blood and dozens of maimed lives. We speak too seldom about such things, the subject does not give rise to debate as it used to, and so the victims of the communist regime wait (in vain?) for justice and for the torturers to be punished.

On their release from detention, the authors of this volume received medical assistance and psychological counselling from the warm-hearted team of doctors led by Ludmila Popovici, the director of the Memoria Center. The maltreated youngsters were helped to pick up their lives from the point at which they were brutally broken off, although for the majority of them the return to their dreams and projects of before carries with it a bitter taste. As the publisher of the present book, the Memoria Center now offers them the opportunity to make their voices heard, to tell the world about the terrible ordeal they underwent.

Reading these harrowing stories about the brutalities inflicted in the commissariats of the Moldovan Police on the night of 7th of April, I was reminded of scenes from Andrzej Wajda's film *Katyn*, in which the persecutors are Stalinist thugs, or of scenes of horror in Nazi torture chambers. Sometimes the reality seems to us too raw, improbable, inconceivable, and we are able to visualise it only by resorting to cultural references, to artistic fictions inspired by one or another abominable chapter of contemporary history, things we have not experienced for ourselves.

Reading this book, I was astounded by the potential for murder and brutality that lurks in human beings. I refer to our compatriots employed as servants of law and order: policemen, prosecutors, judges. We would be mistaken if we believed that such brutal urges might ever be neutralised, the way one might exorcise an unclean spirit. In the circumstances of an odious regime, where values are inverted, the "beast" rises to the surface even in a conscientious public servant – the same man who outside working hours is a loving and devoted husband and father. The stories of the young people contained between the covers of this book constitute not only an explicit set of charges against an odious regime, they also make up a book about *the evil among us*, about those who have no shame or horror at their own brutality, their own perfidy. How many of those monsters with epaulettes, which were at work in the notorious "Cor-

ridor of Death”, have remained in the employ of the Interior Ministry after the reforms implemented during four years of democratic rule? Having now put on uniforms made of European cloth, have they suppressed their brutish urges? Might they not go back to their old habits, might they not rediscover the sadistic pleasure of having their way with defenceless youngsters, if the beginnings of a dictatorship were ever to ripen in Moldova once more?

These are questions we are obliged to ask ourselves, if we want the horrors of 7th of April never to be repeated. In 2009, almost twenty years after the proclamation of independence, we never believed that totalitarian habits could be born again, but this is exactly what happened.

The other astonishing thing about this book is the beautiful feelings, the solidarity, the compassion, and the gestures of humanity that outweigh the all-powerful evil. The majority of the young people who speak herein do not seem to harbour any resentment against their torturers, although they have paid dearly for this serenity and peace of soul. It is they who repent, who search their consciences for moments of weakness during their imprisonment: *“I feel guilty for not having stood up to the beatings and the torture I was subjected to. I feel guilty for having groaned and screamed in pain. And because of that my brother “admitted” to something he hadn’t done and now he is in prison”*, says one of the young people.

In this harrowing confession I discovered the quintessence of the machinery for crushing lives and, at the same time, a sublime expression of the ethical, a proof of love towards one’s fellow man.

A lesson for us all.

***Translation from Romanian
by Alistair Ian Blyth***



*Pamela Kriege Santoso, MPH
Partners in Trauma Healing
Program Manager
The Center for Victims of Torture
St. Paul, Minnesota, United States*

HEALING INDIVIDUALS ALSO HELPS SOCIETIES HEAL

I am humbled by the stories in this collection. The survivors who bravely share their experiences in *I Want to Dream and Fly Again* are vivid examples of how torture is used to silence people.

After their torture, authorities intended these young adults to return to their families, neighborhoods, schools and friends as broken human beings – a powerful symbol to others to keep quiet, to be passive.

But RCTV Memoria changed that dynamic. With supportive care, these are not broken people. Their experiences are a part of them, but do not define them.

Torture is one of the most denounced of all human rights abuses. Juan Mendez, United Nations Special Rapporteur on Torture, has said, “Some form of torture or mistreatment is happening at any moment in at least half the countries of the world”.

Torture survivor centers like RCTV Memoria are an important partner in the emerging torture rehabilitation movement; a movement that heals victims and helps communities recover after conflict and systemic human rights abuses.

By healing individuals, Memoria proves the torturers wrong: Victims are not destroyed but emerge as survivors, resilient people who rebuild productive lives of dignity.

Healing individuals also helps societies heal. Torture can leave whole communities apathetic and frightened, unwilling to participate in public life. These stories are not only an important documentation of grave injustices, but they allow all of us to acknowledge and understand just how corrosive torture is to individuals, families and communities.

Many stories described how the words of police caused each of them such humiliation and pain. *I Want to Dream and Fly Again* is an antidote to that cruelty.

*Alison Morse,
Writer,
Minneapolis, USA*



THEIR LIVES HAVE BEEN CHANGED FOREVER

I Want to Dream and Fly Again is a collection of stories by twelve young beneficiaries of RCTV Memoria, Moldova's treatment center for torture survivors, knitted together with comments by Memoria's director, Ludmila Popovici. The book is also a testament to the healing power of Memoria's treatment program, and an important chronicle of a chilling, recent episode in Moldova's history.

I am an American writer who believes in the positive power of storytelling. That is why Ludmila Popovici and I worked together in the 2012 Women Peacemakers Program¹, collecting and writing stories about her life and work with Memoria.

Sergiu, Ion, and the other innocent young Moldovan men whose testimonies make up this book, tell stories of how their lives were changed forever by events that occurred in April and May 2009, a time of intense political upheaval in Moldova. Their narratives are honest, filled with unflinching detail, and imbued with hope. Through treatment, love, support and reflection, these men are cre-

¹ http://www.sandiego.edu/peacestudies/institutes/ipj/programs/women_peace_makers/

ating more peaceful, healthy lives.

The stories that make up this book are not just important for the storytellers to write and caregivers of torture survivors to read, they are important for Moldovans and for people all over the world to understand.

I Want to Dream and Fly Again insures that the voices of these innocent young men, who prevailed over brutal, state-sanctioned torture, will be heard for years to come, and the importance of treatment centers like Memoria will not be overlooked.

ACKNOWLEDGMENT



*Ludmila Popovici,
Executive Director,
RCTV Memoria*

The present collection of testimonies entitled *I want to Dream and Fly Again* is the second book containing real life stories narrated by RCTV Memoria`s beneficiaries.

The first book, *Shattered Destinies*, was released in 2005 and presents the dramatic stories of 14 women, who were exiled to Siberia, Kazakhstan and other parts of the former GULAG extreme, at a very tender age.

Since April 2000, when the Center opened its doors to the first patients, we have been determined to create and continuously improve a model for the rehabilitation of torture survivors in Moldova. Beyond the necessary medical treatments, we noticed that their greatest need is, above all, the need to be heard. Later on we came to the understanding that the action that we most perform every day - listening to the traumatic experience of our patients - is actually part of a treatment method.

Narrative psychotherapy is based on people's ability to externalize problems, or rather, to separate them from their own identity. The goal of therapy goes beyond solving the problem faced by the patient as it mainly aims at changing their general way of thinking and viewpoint towards the world whilst improving their lifestyle. This is part of the rehabilitation process and also what we have proposed to do since November 1999, when the Memoria Center was founded, with the support of our colleagues from the ICAR Foundation, Bucharest, Romania, to whom we owe a sincere thank you.

We are also very grateful to our colleagues from the Center for Victims of Torture in Minnesota, USA, as the advent of this book was made possible with the financial support of the project PATH (<http://www.cvt.org/partners-trauma-healing>) which is, in its turn, financially supported by the USAID.

I also wish to offer thankful words of gratitude to all of our team members - Violeta Rebeja, Svetlana Visanu, Svetlana Juganaru, Elena Timofti, Larisa Scorohodco, Radu Marin, Igor Popovici, who contributed to the publication of the book, and the implementation of the assistance programs and of the rehabilitation of torture survivors in Moldova, at RCTV Memoria.

Thank you so much Anna Taylor, from San Diego, USA - our intern in the summer of 2013 and Daniela Cabral, our volunteer from Portugal, who helped in the editing of the English version of the book and expressed a keen interest in the Memoria Center.

Finally, we wish to thank our patients, who have prioritized their trust and gave us their consent to be part of this project, and to share their life experiences.

AFTER ALL THE SUFFERINGS I WENT THROUGH, I FELT LIKE I GREW UP SO FAST...

Vitalie, 19 years old

Ludmila Popovici: *On one of the days during April 2009 I saw Vitalie entering the doors of the Memoria Center. I had known him for a while because he would sometimes come to pick up his grandmother`s prescribed medicine. Since his grandmother was a victim of political repression, she benefited from our assistance. We were very busy that day worrying about the situation in the country, the assistance for the young victims, and the financial problems of the center. In a hurry, I asked him, “Does your grandmother need any urgent help at the moment?”. He bowed his head and replied “No”, and then barely whispered, “I have been beaten at the police station”. His sky-blue eyes were now sad and full of tears. I was astonished - “How is that possible?”. I knew he was a minor and my heart began to beat with strength - God, he`s just a child! I made an effort to smile and encourage him, “Everything will be alright and we will help you...”.*

From all the conversations, interviews and subsequent therapy, I was able to discern from Vitalie`s childhood that he was a lively boy who aimed at being number one in everything he did, a benevolent child who still retained a friendship from kindergarten. He liked to recite poetry and to sing, and he could not wait to grow up and explore the world around him. He had enjoyed music since he was a small child. His father and grandfather used to play various instruments, and when his mother and his aunt, Rita, offered him the chance to attend a music school he gladly accepted and chose the accordion and the piano as his first and the second instruments, respectively. Since the first grade he had been a mem-

ber of the ethno-folk orchestra of the music school “V. Poleacov” while still studying at the “Mihail Sadoveanu” Lyceum, in a class with an “aesthetic” profile.

When asked to tell us something about himself, Vitalie smiled and began to bring up memories...

Vitalie: I was a friendly teenager, like many others. At school I liked nearly all of the courses but I would pay more attention to those that I found more interesting and captivating. I had friends with whom I had great relations, and we would talk about cars, especially their construction. Together we would go for walks and shop, and we also helped each other. Sometimes, when I was alone and observing the poverty around me, I would think about a business that could generate more jobs. I had a great desire for achievement and I was hoping for success in all my future activities, particularly the ones connected with music.

Ludmila Popovici: *Slowly but surely, as he was bringing up memories, we got closer to the drama of his youth – the nightmare that shattered many of his thoughts, hopes and dreams:*

Vitalie: In April 2009 I was an ordinary pupil in the 8th grade. I would go to school each morning at 8:00, I was confident about myself and I felt like I was luckier than some of the others. I had some minor troubles with my studies but I was able to handle it all.

On April 7th, a friend of mine was celebrating his birthday and I was helping him with some preparations. We noticed the news on the television regarding the events taking place in the central square, and out of mere curiosity we decided to go and see what was happening. When we reached Ștefan cel Mare Street, we noticed people shouting slogans. It was total chaos and we lost each other. At some point I realized that I was alone. I was looking for my friends but I could not find them. I waited for about 20 minutes

and then decided to return home. However, not far from the Central Square I was caught by the police on the street, and they hit me on the head several times. I was telling them that I did nothing. When they found out that I was a minor they allowed me to go home. Only few minutes later, however, next to the “Gemenii” shop I was attacked by another group of policemen who knocked me down and cruelly beat me. They were masked and were beating me without mercy with their fists, feet and batons. I could not understand what was happening to me, and I could not defend myself from the hits targeting my back, legs, stomach and especially head. In that moment I thought with horror that I could have received a fatal hit and that is how my life would end.

Not long after, we were thrown onto the rear bed of a pick-up truck. They pushed me very hard on top of other youngsters while some others were thrown over us. I was overwhelmed by panic. I was barely breathing and it seemed like just a few moments before we reached the Buiucani Police Station. Using a frightening tone they ordered us to jump out of the truck, one at a time, and move towards the entrance and into the Station. As we moved towards the entrance we had to pass through two lines of police officers that were mercilessly hitting us. We were pushed from one side to another so that we could get hit harder by more officers. Later I learned that the name of this procedure is called the “Corridor of Death”, and it was indeed the way I saw it at that point since I felt like death was somewhere near...

Inside on a narrow corridor of the Commissariat, we were forced to sit on our knees on the cold concrete floor. We were divided into two columns facing the wall, with our hands behind our head. One policeman was walking among us and ordered us to stay still. His voice seemed furious and threatening, in addition to the insults we could hear from him. I would have never imagined policemen possessing a vocabulary so humiliating, horrible and miserable. I was trembling from fear and cold for nearly three hours. We would get

tired but we were struck each time we moved. I did not move much so I only got a hit on the back, but some of the others were cruelly beaten, also with both palms over the ears. I tried to help a guy that fell as a result of a strong hit but I was threatened that I would be beaten again, so I stopped. They were calling us one at a time into an office with an open door, from which the light spread along the corridor. The door did not close behind those that entered in order to intimidate and scare the individuals who were still waiting for their turn. We could hear screams, kicks, threats and accusations that were not necessarily related to the events of April the 7th. The ones that were called would stay in the office for approximately 10-15 minutes, maybe a bit more. When I was called in they accused me of throwing rocks into the Parliament building although I did not do that and I was not even there during the day. But they would not listen and I was beaten with a cruelty I have never before seen in my life. I was very scared and that night seemed to last forever.

In the morning they took us to the placement center for minors and when I got there I was tired, scared and confused. They removed our clothes, arguing that it was necessary for the “search” and took our shoelaces, belts and other objects. Once again they humiliated us verbally and hit us and then they locked us in a small cell. There were 13 of us arrested, but there were only two beds which would not be able to accommodate us all. Extremely tired, I laid on the floor, and covered myself with a thin and dirty blanket that smelled horrible. I think I slept for about an hour before they called us for breakfast: porridge, bread with butter and tea. They sent me to one office where they filmed me without my consent but I was scared and confused. I could not understand much of what they were asking me or what they wanted from me, but later I learned that some sequences were shown on television, which made me feel humiliated. I was also ashamed of what was happening to me.

When I was under arrest I was not allowed to inform my family of my whereabouts although I begged them to allow me to contact

my mother since I never came home late. She was looking for me, calling me on my phone but no one was responding, and no one was informing her about my situation. My mother was notified about my location by the Juvenile Placement Center, on the second day at around 1:00 PM. Thus my nightmare came to an end around 4:30 PM but I still feel the consequences today.

When I returned home, in addition to sleeping problems, I had painful and horrible nightmares. I was very fearful, and I suffered from headaches, and heart pain, but I was also scared by the pain throughout my body – my muscles, my back. I felt dizzy, I would get tired quickly and I could not focus on the ordinary tasks that previously seemed so simple. For some days afterward I did not have the strength or the will to leave the house. I returned to a normal life only after a period of intense rehabilitation. I would have never thought that I would ask for help from RCTV Memoria, which was assisting my grandmother as well.

Ludmila Popovici: *Throughout the four years that we have known Vitalie for, we have had both good and bad periods, but Vitalie grew up physically and intellectually before our eyes. I like the way he thinks and the way he tries to build up his future and recover from the traumas, even though he cannot erase them from his memory. He has his own philosophical approach about his traumatic experience, but he does not bear seeds of hatred and revenge in his heart, and for this I admire him.*

Vitalie: I believe that aggression indicates a low level of intelligence. I came to the conclusion that the policemen have their own personal issues and that they take out their grief and anger on the citizens that reach their offices, some of whom may not have broken the law. Since I suffered the traumas, I feel that I have grown up quickly. I became slightly more introverted, more careful, and I be-

gan to understand life as a treasure given to us, a treasure that has to be kept and viewed with prudence. I learned that trials can also bring strength and resistance. I want our people to be more united, without the fear of expressing their views and wishes on the streets, but to do that the right way.

I cannot forget the past but I feel much better now. I wish to travel, to go abroad and discover other states and peoples, and study cultures, traditions and mindsets. I wish also to contribute to the development and promotion of our culture. I have only visited Romania, with the support of the Moldovan Embassy and the Chişinau City Hall. For whatever reason I have not yet managed to see the sea but I hope I will this year.

Ludmila Popovici: *I sometimes regret that I did not have more time for our beneficiaries since I have been busy with other administrative duties, but I enjoy observing their achievements, successes and results, to which the RCTV Memoria team contributed as well. Vitalie`s case is special and he enjoyed special attention from us, like other young individuals that suffered in April 2009. He was constantly encouraged to continue with his music education although he did not have his own musical instrument. I think one of the happiest moments of his life was on April 6th, 2012 when the former Prime Minister Vlad Filat gave him the money needed to purchase an accordion. It was an unexpected but a very beautiful gesture from Mr. Filat! I was looking at Vitalie smile when he called his teacher to share his excitement and ask for assistance so that he could buy his own accordion. Recently he delighted us with several songs at our musical evening organized on June 26th – the UN International Day in Support of Victims of Torture. He was applauded by all those present...*

I WAS ONE OF THE YOUNG PEOPLE WHO WANTED A CHANGE...

Nicolae, 23 years old

Ludmila Popovici: *I met Nicolae in mid-May 2009, a month after his release from custody. He was directed to Memoria Center by his lawyer, for assistance and documentation of the case. During this time we had several meetings with the lawyers, in which we attempted to explain how important it is for young people to be assisted as soon as possible, since late consequences are much more difficult to treat. Moreover, our team was already prepared to assist young maltreated people because the Swiss-based Amnesty International had previously informed us that we were about to receive an urgent grant for rehabilitation activities. The April events caught us in a financial crisis; it was very difficult to obtain financial support for torture victims' rehabilitation, especially since it was not a priority for the donors that were particularly active at that time in Moldova.*

As soon as he entered our center, this young man caught my attention with his way of seeing the world, his correctness and attitude towards everything that was happening around him. At that time he needed support to overcome enormous fears that dominated him, as well as other issues connected with the sufferings he went through. Nevertheless, as time went by he became one of those that no longer feared to speak out about the horrors that took place in those dark days of April 2009. I am glad that he agreed to become one of the protagonists of this book because he will not only feel much better, his dramatic story will also contribute to a change in people's attitudes in respect to those who suffered the

consequences of injustice yet who equally found the strength to move on, assert themselves and fulfill their dreams. Therefore, I urge you to read his story.

Nicolae: No one could predict the nightmare I went through. On the 7th of April, as many other young people, I took part in the protests at the National Square in Chisinau. As the evening was approaching I was caught by surprise whilst things took an unexpected turn; two major buildings, the Parliament and Presidency – were destroyed. Consequently, I decided to go home and by 11:30 PM I had already gotten on a bus on my way to the South Moldova. At some point we were surrounded by masked people armed with automatic weapons, who were threatening to open fire if anyone moved. We were all shocked and none of us tried to resist. We were taken to the General Police Commissariat of Chisinau, where obscure, frightening days awaited us, with guns closely pointed at us, whilst being threatened and cursed at.

Prior the so-called “interrogation”, they kept us 5-6 hours with our hands up against the wall. Because of the cold and the stress, I was shaking uncontrollably and incessantly. But the fear was even greater: if someone moved or cried because of the pain, stronger hits would follow immediately. At that time I thought we should not move but, rather, endure, so that I would avoid being beaten severely.

After these hours of sheer hell, I was forced to pass through a narrow, dark corridor, where policemen standing on both sides would beat us – this was the so-called “Corridor of Death”. Once inside an office, I was forced to undress. Standing in humiliation in front of them, they were threatening me that after the arrest they would come to rape me. Those words ruined me morally and later in the cell I could not keep calm nor find tranquility. I was shaking and praying to God for the officers to not show up.

During the first few days I was often photographed, interrogated, threatened and frightened by the police. Throughout the three days that I spent at the General Commissariat they only gave me food once – a soup that looked horrible. As I was very hungry I solely ate a few spoonfuls and threw the rest away since it was extremely unpleasant.

The cell in which we were detained was about 12 square meters; however, about 14-16 persons were forced to co-exist within it. We were not allowed to sleep during the day and during the night it was impossible since we could not all fit in the one single wooden bed we had in the cell. The small window had two layers – a metal plate and thick glass which would not allow the sunlight to penetrate making it very difficult for us to understand whether it was day or night. Instead of a toilet, we had, in an ordinary corner, without any kind of walls or privacy, a simple drainage hole. And since we were many people, in a very short period of time, a very strong and revolting smell was formed. Furthermore, I not only had none of my basic hygiene needs satisfied, we were also not allowed to receive any packages.

On the second day of detention, a nurse tried to take blood from my veins with a syringe that had already been used on someone else. With fear resonating in my voice, I asked her to change the syringe. Perhaps there were too many people and not enough syringes yet I could not understand the reason for blood collection.

Each time they checked the list they would call us out with disrespectful, dirty words and would laugh at us: *“What?! You wanted freedom, democracy?”*

All these days in detention seemed like an endless nightmare to me. Something that was further aggravated by our unawareness of whether it was day or night. We voiced desperate requests to tell us what time it was, requests that were met with refusal and laughter from the police.

Later on I learned that, in those days, it was not only the officers who were breaking the law but also some attorney lawyers who were hunting us to make money out of our misfortune. When I met the appointed lawyer, I was assured that the service was going to be free of charge. But, in a rapid turn of events, he called my aunt and threatened her that if she did not pay 5000 Moldovan lei (about 400 \$) by the end of that same day, I would risk being sentenced to 5-20 years. He lied to her as he said that I would have been accused of and sentenced as guilty for destroying the parliament and the presidency buildings. My aunt gave the money to some of my friends so that they could drive to Chisinau and pay for my “freedom”. My lawyer promised my friends that if he received the money I could be released sooner than planned. But they had already heard about lawyers like him, who take the requested money and soon after disappear, so they refused to hand it in.

The third day, the prosecutor handed me a document, according to which I was accused of committing mass disorders and of active participation in the devastation of the government buildings. Later on I was taken to another office within the same General Police Commissariat where a judge was waiting for us. One by one, he was calling for the prosecutors, the detainees and police officers. Each file had been examined for about 10 minutes. It felt like a conveyor. Most of those arrested received 30 days of arrest. When my turn came, I entered an office where the so-called judge, secretary, prosecutor and an appointed lawyer were waiting. Thus, the trial took place almost faster than the prosecutor procedures, as it was clear that the judge was in a hurry to read my 30 days sentence, but most importantly, that my messages accusing them of having subjected me to improper treatment, my arguing that I could have not participate in the devastation of the buildings since I was not even present in the Square, they meant nothing for them.

The same night I was taken to Penitentiary Nr. 13, where again I found myself in a state of fear, particularly because my father was

part of the “system” and because those around me were saying that according to the prison law I could be punished. The fact is that I was locked with long-term detainees, namely a person detained for 13 years, out of which he spent 7 years in the Penitentiary Nr. 13. Another detainee was previously convicted for rape; another one had been imprisoned for 7 years, another was released 2 days after my arrival.

In the cell the detainees cut my hair against my will. The entire period of detention was a real life nightmare caused by the horror felt and the ever present fear that the detainees could find out who my father was.

On April 15th, 2009 I was taken to the Chisinau Court of Appeal. There I was filmed while in the cell, together with the other ones who had also been arrested. To my joy, I was released from the courtroom as the verdict had been changed. I went home to my parents but I felt that I was being watched and followed. Many people would recognize me from the TV and they had different opinions: some would encourage me while others would blame me for the vandalized buildings.

The time that I spent in detention was very difficult for me to recover. Firstly because I was a student and I had to graduate from college, which involved an internship and final exams. Most of the older teachers approached me with hatred, as all of those who had been arrested were labeled as vandals who destroyed the Parliament and the Presidential buildings. Due to absences I also had problems with the admission to the exams. Compared to my colleagues, I did not have sufficient time to deal with the internship, which resulted in a lower average grade. However, I got 10 for my first Final exam, and 8 for the second, which involved the internship. But my chances of being enrolled at the University with a scholarship were quite low. At the same time the cost was about 8000 Moldovan lei (about 650 \$), a lot for our family budget which had also suffered, at many levels, due to the illegal arrest and the nightmare I went through.

In addition to the above, I had problems with the return of my belongings which were confiscated at the moment of arrest, including my Driver`s license, ID card and house keys. After several requests and subsequent evasive answers, some journalists from a TV station finally helped me. Only after the appearance in the media did the investigator return my personal belongings.

The dramatic experience I went through affected my whole family. My mother was, at the time, in Italy working and she suffered greatly because she did not know what was happening to me. The news were transmitting scary images with victims, missing persons and so on. She was calling home very often, calling the lawyer, relatives, asking them to help me with anything they could. Due to strong stress and intense emotions my mother suffered a heart attack and needed treatment. My father had big problems at work and was often criticized for my situation, so he was already prepared to request for dismissal, although he only had a year and a few months till retirement.

On October 29th, 2009 I was informed that the Chisinau Prosecutor office ceased prosecution on my case since my acts had not met the elements of an offense. I did not, however, receive any moral or material compensation.

Thus, with the help of my lawyer I tried to defend my rights to moral and material compensations caused by the illegal arrest, illegal measures as part of the arrest and the violations of my rights and the law. We managed, but it became clear that just as in other cases, the fabrication of the criminal case and the restrictive measures were a result of a political order, which is demonstrated by the ceasing of proceedings.

I would not want the drama suffered by us in April 2009 to happen again. I wish everyone`s rights in Moldova to be guaranteed and respected.

THE CHANGE IN MY LIFE, OR THE 3 DAYS THAT SEEMED TO LAST FOREVER...

Ion, 27 years old

Ion: In April of 2009 I was a student at the Technical University in Chisinau. It was my last year at the university and I was getting ready to submit my bachelor's thesis. I was also working in order to sustain myself because I wanted to make it easier for my parents, who were helping me as much as they could. Like others my age, I had a lot of plans. I was also interested in what was happening in society and I wanted a change for the better. But change came into my life, when I was arrested shortly after midnight on April 8th, 2009.

After a day rich in events, emotions and confusion I was on my way home and thinking about everything that had happened in the previous days, but I had more questions than answers. I was approaching *Renașterii* ("Renaissance") Boulevard when suddenly, a group of police officers approached from around the corner. They told me to lie on the ground or they would shoot. I was stunned and afraid that I might get shot. Three people attacked me; two in police uniforms and one in civilian clothes. Everything happened so quickly that I could not understand what was going on. I was hit many times and they knocked me down. I was struck with a rifle butt and then they hit my head against the asphalt. Perhaps I fell unconscious for a while since I do not remember them lifting me up and dragging me towards the Square. I was shocked by everything I saw there, but we were thrown in a car with many others and taken to the General Police Station.

I had a headache, and I was very confused. I was really scared because I did not know what to expect next or what would happen

to me. Beaten, kicked and mocked with the worst words, I was taken to a garage of the police station where other people were also held, including two girls. I could hear their screams and I realized that they were being beaten just like the guys were. I spent a lot of time facing the wall and wondering what was going on and how many people were under arrest, since there was not enough room inside the police station. I was beaten again and two of the hits were particularly strong. I was shocked-everything was horrifying to me, and I was deeply fearful. I thought I would not get out alive. I could see how the guys around me were beaten and I noticed that if somebody would move, ask or require something, they would get beaten. I was trying to obey their orders and not ask or request anything so I would not get beaten.

I was beaten very hard but I thought that the other guys were suffering even more than me. Their suffering affected me even more especially since I could not help them with anything. For example, one of the guys I was sharing my cell with had his ribs fractured and could not breathe properly. He did not get any medical assistance and I did not know how to help him out. They were constantly transferred from one cell to another and the other guys as well. I had constant inner tension because of fear and the lack of information. I did not know what to expect next and I found myself in a state of complete uncertainty.

I was shocked by the way the policemen were behaving and the way they were talking to us. They were cursing and insulting us. Humiliating me in so many ways, they also threatened that I would not continue my studies and I would be expelled from the university. At that moment I thought that it could really be possible. I was depressed and worried. I was also thinking about how much my parents would suffer if they found out that I would be expelled from the university, and how terrible it would be for my mother to find out that I was under arrest. I was completely discouraged. It seemed that the nightmare would never end. I thought I had no future and

that I would find myself in detention for a long time. I was very scared and thought that there was no way out.

I spent three days at the police station but it seemed to last forever. I was released but I received 20 days of house arrest. Later on I learned that the number of days of house arrest depended on the visible injuries from the beatings. Thus, they tried to make sure that we would not be seen by a lot of people. Either way, most of us would not leave the house due to strong fearfulness.

Because of the house arrest and the health problems which resulted from the beatings, I had problems at my university. It was during my last year of studies. I had to defend my bachelor thesis and prepare for the final exams. But I had terrible headaches, a hard time focusing, and I would rapidly forget everything I would study. Since it was difficult to focus and absorb the information, I had serious trouble studying for the exams.

Before the arrest, in addition to the studies, I also worked for a private person. Since I did not go to work, as well as for other reasons, I was unemployed and I had no source of income. My health issues resulting from the sufferings had a great impact on my ability to physically work. I could not ask for help from my parents since they did not know that I had been arrested, although they noticed some changes. I did not want them to have more things to worry about...

I have always been a leader, both in school and at the university. Now I have become more secluded and I cannot be the same as before. It bothers me a lot. I try to deal with the tasks at work but sometimes they require extra effort. Things changed a bit with my relationships with friends as well. With regard to my psychological strength and my ability to deal with difficulties I encounter, I feel

much weaker than before the arrest. Memories of those events continue to terrify me. My heart starts to beat faster and I feel tension in all my muscles. I think that the consequences of the arrest, the maltreatment, and the humiliation I went through will follow me for a long time, perhaps for the rest of my life. It will be good if I can escape them. I hope I will succeed.

Ludmila Popovici: *There are some people that create a good impression at first glance, that inculcate peace and gentleness. Despite all the hardships they have gone through, they remain the ones you can trust. I often thought and even asked myself why Ion didn't inform his parents about what had happened. Maybe that could make it easier for him to go on. His answer was simple: I did not want them to suffer! This is his nature – an altruist who is more sensitive to the pain and suffering of others than his own. I have known him all these years in which he has been benefiting from our assistance. I also admired him once during a guitar night which we organized together with our beneficiaries in 2010, as a part of a summer school. He has a beautiful voice that charmed everybody.*

Often when we discuss with the young people that went through the nightmare of April 7th, I remember the words which I heard from a high ranking official: “We will still have to clarify what exactly you’re doing at Memoria, you assist criminals that destroyed the government buildings”. We were in a public place, with many other people and those words hurt me – who know about their sufferings from the discussions. But how do they feel? What is going on inside their hearts? What will their future bring after such traumas?

These are the questions that motivate us to make an effort to stand beside them whenever they are in need.

I WILL NEVER BE THE SAME AS BEFORE THE ARREST

Sergiu, 26 years old

Ludmila Popovici: *When I first saw him with his lawyer, he seemed like a child. I was impressed by his big dark eyes that looked at us with hope, but also with fear and doubt. I tried to catch his eye and inspire confidence. I wanted to understand his drama as quickly and as thoroughly as possible, in order to be able to help him as much as possible. I realized that he was a very special, good-hearted and sensitive young individual. I was looking into his eyes and I could observe his effort to control his emotions and sufferings. But his teary eyes were revealing pain from the depths of his soul. I realized that the large scars from surgery along his arm that had been broken during the severe beatings did not bother him as much as the unrestrained pain from deep inside.*

While documenting his case, we were also interested in Sergiu`s life prior to the suffering and pain he went through. We eventually found out that he was an ordinary boy, like many others, who loved his parents and brothers. He was a student who was learning, dreaming, playing the guitar and enjoying sports. Coming from a large family, he had to work in order to pay his tuition fees. One month prior to the nightmare he earned the title of National Taekwondo Champion. As a member of the national team, he was already thinking of the European Championship. A training camp by the seaside had already been planned for the summer. Beautiful plans! All destroyed within one day...

Sergiu: On April 8th, 2009, around 8:30 PM, my sister and I were waiting for the trolleybus at the Mihai Eminescu National Theatre station on our way home. Like many others during those days, we were discussing the April 7th events, since we had just received a flyer with the call from Dorin Chirtoacă, the mayor of the city, asking for the unconditional release of all those arrested the previous night. We were shocked by the events in Chisinau and confused due to the lack of reliable information. I was absorbed in my own thoughts when a black car suddenly stopped in front of us and three unknown individuals, without any kind of legitimization or explanation, grabbed me by my arms, twisting them behind my back, and hit my face on the trunk of the car, trying to forcibly push me inside.

Being surprised as well as worried for my sister, I fought back. I managed to free myself in order to protect my sister, but then three more unknown people came out from behind the station and hit me, and forced me to get into the car. My sister was very scared and was asking them to leave me alone, and then she ran down the street to a policeman to tell him that I was kidnapped by strangers. When he told her to go to the Central Police Office, she ran there immediately, unaware of the fact that I had been abusively arrested by the police. When she was attempting to find out something about me, they told her that there was no such person arrested, although I was there. Only later did I realize the extreme stress that my family had to experience.

While they were transporting me, I thought they were taking me somewhere to shoot me because of the injuries, brutality, threats, and terror I had experienced. I calmed down when I realized that I was at the police station, although I had been taken there by force, with my head bowed so that I would not see anything around. I thought I had been arrested by mistake and would soon be released since I was innocent. Inside the police station, to the right of the

entrance and the guard unit, I was knocked down on my knees next to a wall. The people that brought me in were continuously hitting me with their feet and fists until I lost consciousness. When I awoke I was already in the metal cage, which was crowded with detainees, including minors. We could not move because the cage was overcrowded.

Two policemen were registering us through the bars. One would question us and the other would register the answers. When it was my turn to introduce myself, they told me to empty out everything that I had in my pockets. I took out my keys, wallet and some other things, but when I found the flyer with the Mayor's call in my pocket, I was struck by a wave of fear and started trembling. I was stuck, but I had no choice and so I gave the policeman the flyer. His reaction was terrible and very aggressive.

I must have been mistaken for someone else they were trying to arrest, since the policemen were insistently asking me to admit that I lived at a certain address. The fact that I was denying it and explaining to them that I lived with my brother and sister at another address made them even angrier.

At one point I noticed through the bars that another policeman had entered the room, approached his colleagues and discussed something, and then shouted, "Let me clarify that with him. I will make him speak". He came to the cage, asked one of his colleagues to open the gate, and told me to follow him but did not inform me about where we were going or what I would have to do. He was about my height but slimmer; he had short hair and was unshaven. I was confused and scared, but I continued moving forward, stopping from time to time since I did not know where I was going and the long corridor we passed through was very dark with only a very weak light bulb at the end. As I was going up the stairs he was continuously hitting me from behind. I could hardly bear each hit, especially the ones targeting my head and neck.

The many blows were very painful. I was stopping on each floor since I did not know where to go, but the policeman kept hitting me and forcing me to go up and up. At the fifth and top floor, he told me to proceed towards the end of the corridor. The door of the last office on the left was open, and a few policemen were watching a football game. As I was walking down the corridor I noticed crumpled carpet on the floor and bloodstains on the walls. From behind some of the doors I could hear screams of pain as well as whistles from straps or cables. I was horrified and thought that I might not get out alive.

Once I entered the office, the policeman ordered me to stand in the middle of the room, then continued asking me questions like, “*Who brought you to the square? Who paid you to go there?*”. I could not understand what he was assuming or what was he asking me. After a few minutes the policeman took his brown coat off, rolled up his shirt sleeves, and began to beat me. He was hitting me and questioning me about the 7th of April events, and with each of my answers he would hit me harder and harder. I tried to explain that I was on my way to the gym for taekwondo practice and that the public transportation was stuck due to the protests. When he found out that I was a sportsman he became more aggressive and began to mock me with phrases like “*I will teach you taekwondo, different from your practices*”. He would hit me hard with all his strength, using various techniques, and was asking me what those hits would be called in Korean. At some point I realized that my response provoked him even more. I decided to remain silent, overwhelmed by a sense of powerlessness and total fear. I felt like they were intending to destroy me both physically and mentally.

I was holding my arm where I felt horrible pain. I tried to tell him that my arm hurt very much and that it was probably broken. However, he reacted aggressively and continued to hit me, saying that I was lying. He was intentionally hitting my left arm and he was being entertained by it. I was horrified to see how he was acting as

if he received pleasure from what he was doing, in front of the other policemen who were in the same room. They were telling me that if I said who paid me to be in front of the Parliament, I could get out alive. Otherwise, they said, I would be killed and no one would know what happened to me. I told them that I was not in front of the Parliament but the policeman hitting me ignored me. I told them what I did on April 7th, 2009 in great detail- minute by minute. They were asking me for other names and phone numbers of my friends. They brought in my phone and asked me about each of the people on my contact list. In the meantime my mother was calling and a policeman would hang up the phone every single time. My mother insistently called me so eventually they switched my phone off and threw it on the table. I later realized that my mother was extremely worried that evening and searched everywhere for me.

I cannot say exactly how long I stayed in that office but it seemed to last forever. At some point the one that was hitting me said, *“Let `s go, the boss is calling us”* and took his coat and left. Another policeman who previously had been walking around the corridor told me to come out and follow him. In the office next door he told me to take a seat at a desk. Even this gesture puzzled me a bit considering the ill-treatment I had been exposed to in the other office. I felt like I had left hell and reached heaven because he did not hit me and spoke respectfully. He calmed me down, explained that everything would be alright and asked me to write down my explanation on a paper. I began writing but my left arm felt as if it was burning, with a sharp pain that made me close to losing consciousness.

I barely wrote 2-3 pages before I was taken to the office of a Major, with a big star on his epaulettes. He told me to take a seat and began filling out some forms. At the same time two minors were brought into the office and one of the policemen asked *“What should we do with them, they are minors?”*. The Major replied to take them to the Shelter for Minors. I saw one of them the next day in the Emergency Hospital with a broken leg which had been put in a cast, but when I

saw him the first evening he had not been beaten yet. Later I learned that he had been thrown in the street unconscious after he was severely beaten by the police.

Ludmila Popovici: *Do you remember other details from that night?*

Sergiu: From the office of the Major I was taken downstairs, to the metal cage, where I could only see one person. He seemed confused and kept asking me, “*Why are they beating us?*”, as if I knew the answer. I learned that he had been arrested on the street as well, without any explanation. I felt sorry for him even though now I find it a bit funny how we looked at that point – beaten, ruffled, with torn and creased clothes and him with only one shoe.

Ludmila Popovici: *Sergiu smiled again, and then we laughed a bit since sometimes it is useful to laugh about your troubles, and then he continued to bring up more memories.*

Sergiu: There were three policemen in the room and they had to make a decision about my case. Referring to the sentence, one of them asked, “*How much should this one get?*”. Another one answered, “*This one is more beaten up, let`s consider more charges like public nuisance and mass disorders*”. I did not know what that meant and I thought that I would go to prison for many years, like they had threatened me. I was forced to sign a report. At first I refused but when they asked, “*Do you want to go upstairs again?*”. I thought that I would rather stay in prison than go back there where I may be killed. I signed without being allowed to read it and they threatened me that the second time they would “enlighten” me.

Ludmila Popovici: *His eyes became sad again. Perhaps he was thinking of the stupidity and illegality of the situation generated by the system where hundreds of young people were mistreated for no reason.*

Sergiu: It was already late at night and I was feeling worse and worse. A police guard who had just come on duty asked me what was wrong and I told him that my left arm hurt a lot. He entered the room with the metal cage, made a cup of tea and I noticed that he had a box of biscuits. I looked at his yellow cup of tea which said “Lipton” on it and I felt hungry and thirsty. He told me to come closer. I barely pulled up my sleeve but when he saw my arm, sore and very bruised, he told me that he would immediately call an ambulance. The other officers were saying that I could wait until morning. But, observing my condition, he insisted on calling an ambulance. He argued that if I was left until morning I could die, and he would not want to be responsible for that. He told one of the other officers, *“If something happens to him, we would be accused of inflicting his injuries”*. He might have thought that I could die and no one would know the truth or maybe he had a good heart. Either way, he was my savior because he called the ambulance with the doctors.

Pretty soon two doctors arrived – an older and a younger one, and examined me and concluded that they would have to take me to the hospital. One of the policemen, who was wearing civilian clothes, opposed the idea but the doctors insisted that it was serious. The other officers said nothing. I was in the ambulance, accompanied by the policeman in civilian clothes, who all the way there kept reminding me to not say anything that had happened, or otherwise I would be punished. We were also followed by a police car. At the Emergency Hospital they took an X-Ray of my arm, and while they were examining me a doctor asked what happened. After listening to me, the doctor went to the policemen and scolded them, telling them that they are torturers, that they kill children and that all night they had received patients beaten by the police. A big argument erupted since the policemen were defending themselves, saying that they did nothing. The officers asked them to cast my arm so that they could take me back to the Police Station but the doctor stood firmly and said that *“they could only take me dead and that since I was alive he is the one responsible for me”*. The doctor

insisted that I stay since my condition was very bad and I required specialization for urgent surgery needed for my left arm. While observing the doctor's opposition, one of the policemen from the car that followed the ambulance insisted that they needed to proceed with the "hearings" within the hospital-although I had had enough of that from the police.

The questioning lasted 10-15 minutes since it was late at night – almost 2 AM, then the policeman left. I was asked where I had been beaten, by whom, for what reason and so on. I later learned, however, that he wrote that I had not been beaten by the police, that my arm was broken in the PMAN² Square, and that I had nothing to do with the police, etc. He asked me to sign that report without reading it. After I signed it I asked him what would happen to me afterwards since the report from the Police Station accused me of theft, rioting, public disorder, etc. He told me to let him clarify the situation and that everything would be fine.

I was hospitalized and underwent a two-week treatment prior to the surgery when a metal plate with eleven screws implanted in my left arm. I was released from the hospital after about three weeks with my arm in a cast, but I felt very bad – weak and scared by the things happening within our society. Later on I underwent another surgery and the recovery was difficult, with multiple treatments.

In general, the maltreatment and torture I experienced affected my life greatly. Due to health problems I could not physically or intellectually get things done. So I was left without the opportunity to earn the money I needed to pay my university tuition fees. I interrupted my studies and then I transferred to the studies with reduced attendance, because the fee was a bit smaller. The fact that I could not train for a while was also affecting me.

² PMAN - Piața Marii Adunări Naționale - Great National Assembly Square in the front of the Moldovan Government building

All this time I`ve enjoyed the support of family, friends, the team from RCTV Memoria and my lawyer, for all of whom I am very grateful. The trial against the police officer who maltreated me continued for four years. Recently he was acquitted by the court. Although I am disappointed with our justice system, I hope that in the end, justices will triumph. Not only for me, but also for other young people, who like me have been destroyed by the system and now need to rebuild their lives which were significantly affected by ill-treatment. One thing is certain: neither I nor the other young people like me, will ever be the same as before the nightmare we went through. Our life is divided into two clearly defined periods: “before” and “after”.

But I understood one important thing: No matter what happens in life, there will always be people that will help you to stand up and move on. I also learned that it does not matter as much how you start, as how it ends. Whatever happens one should find strength to move on, because time does not forgive and wait for anyone. Every negative situation has its bright side, in the same way the sun comes out after a storm and heavy rain. If that day, April 7th, would not have happened, we would not have met. I had the chance to meet a lot of great people that influenced me for the rest of my life. Perhaps the price for meeting these people is a bit higher but I cannot change anything about my unfortunate experience. It was terrible but I thank God I managed to get over it.

Ludmila Popovici: *I look at Sergiu and he reminds me of other persons that try to look at the bright side and be grateful for benefiting from everything Memoria had to offer. These four years that we have known each other flash in front of my eyes. There were good and bad periods, with aggravations that appeared especially when Sergiu met the attacker at the prosecutor`s office. Sergiu is a wonderful young man, he plays the guitar very well, he has a good heart, and he is always willing to help. He has great*

plans for the future in regard to his studies, sports, family, music and others, and in his spare time he is a volunteer.

Last year he traveled to the United States for a few months where he felt very well, more comfortable, and safer. He had problems with recovery, including re-experiencing the sufferings caused by the court sessions and hearings. I helped in the best way I was able to, even sending letters to the Ministry of Education, asking for help in regard to a tuition waiver. We enjoy his many successes but we are worried by his health problems. For these reasons we are permanently in contact through e-mail, Skype and other social networks, and we would be ready to help whenever it would be needed. Tomorrow he is leaving for the United States for a few months, with the help of his friends that are there. He will travel, train, participate in various competitions, and make new friends. Life goes on... Have a nice flight, Sergiu!

Chisinau, May 2013.

I LEARNED TO HOLD MY BELOVED MUCH CLOSER

Roman, 23 years old

Ludmila Popovici: *He and his father visited us one summer day. He had a serene face and a smile that charmed everybody at the Memoria Center. But if as the saying goes, the eyes are the mirror of the soul, his eyes betrayed immense suffering. It was the fear dominating his life that brought him to us. The traumas he had been through at such a young age greatly impacted him and affected the formation of his personality. His stories seem to be ripped from one of the books on Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). His case is special and we were very happy when he agreed to be part of this project and have his story in this book.*

Roman: As a teenager, I was communicative, cheerful, playful, and very friendly with all of my colleagues. I studied at the Mihai Eminescu Lyceum in Chisinau. I loved my family, but I did not fully realize their importance until the ordeal.

I was arrested on April 10th, 2009. I was late to class that day, and arrived during the break before the second lesson. A group of my colleagues had gathered in front of the school. When I approached, they told me that one of our colleagues was arrested and that the police were looking for me as well. They advised me to run, but I realized that running would only delay the arrest. I assumed that I was already on their list, so I could not consider running away as a solution. While I was thinking about what I should do, a car stopped near us, and two individuals in plainclothes approached. One of them was holding a picture from the protests, which had been placed on the internet by an amateur photographer. They forced me to join them and took me to the Botanica Police Station.

After I arrived, I was taken to an office where two policemen were waiting for me. They started shouting and insulting me in Russian, with no clear questions or explanations regarding my arrest. While listening to them I realized that I had been arrested for participating in the April 7th protests. They did not beat me because, even though I had not told them, they somehow knew that my father was a policeman. They wanted to call my father but I asked them not to because I did not want my father to know about my arrest. I was sure that I would be released the same day because I was innocent, and had not committed any crimes. But I was wrong!

Later that evening I was interrogated without access to water or food, and without permission to go the toilet when necessary. They wanted me to admit that I was paid to go to the square, and they asked me about the organizers, and other participants of the protest. They forced me to give information about the other protesters, including a girl that they observed in the protest pictures, but who I had never met. They spoke to me in an insulting manner and I was humiliated by being called various offensive names. There were also insults addressed to my father, an extraordinarily upsetting fact that I could hardly bear. But then I realized that they wanted to confuse and infuriate me on purpose. I tried to be cool, although I was barely keeping myself calm after they offended my father, a man I idolized. One of the officers took his weapon and pointed it at me from a distance of about three meters. Then he checked the number of bullets and aimed again. I was so scared; I thought I was about to get shot.

The “explanation” that I had to write was dictated by the investigators. What they dictated was based on the real events, but the way it was interpreted was biased and wrong. I did not agree with almost half of what they prepared, but they threatened me and forced me to write it down even though there was not a lawyer present. However, I did not sign the statement. Later I was given a public lawyer – a young lady. In her presence I was able to rewrite the explanation, without the interpretations imposed by the police.

The next evening the police showed me a document that accused me of stealing goods from the government buildings destroyed during the protests I was then transferred to the General Police Commissariat. As I was taken there, my father managed to see me and bring me a package of food. I ate for the first time in two days. At the General Police Commissariat I was “accommodated” in a cell with two inmates, both between 30-40 years old, who had been previously arrested for certain crimes. One of them had previously been in prison for several years. He was quite strong and very nervous. As soon as I entered the cell they asked me questions such as “*How is your life going?*” and things like that. Their questions scared me even more since they used jargon that I did not really understand. I sat in a corner and responded with caution so that I would not somehow upset them, although they treated me well. Once in a while they would show care and serve me some food, but I could not eat. At one point one of them showed me a blade that he claimed he found in a crack between the boards, and then he hid it again.

The same evening three other boys were brought to the cell whose arrests were connected with the protest as well. All of them were severely beaten by the police, were bruised and had blood all over them. I was deeply affected by what I saw. It was hard to believe that something like that could happen to me or anyone else, although my father had told me that some policemen would beat those who were arrested. Just over a half an hour later they were taken from the cell and I was once again alone with the two criminals. I did not sleep all night because I was afraid that they would harm me while I was asleep, especially after I had seen the blade. In addition to this, I could hear screams, cries and moans all night long from the corridor, probably from the guys who I think were beaten. At one point I heard hysterical screams and a girl crying.

The night in the cell was very cold. Although I was wearing a jacket the morning they arrested me, I was freezing in the cell. My whole body was shaking but maybe it was in response to the fear I

was experiencing. I was also disoriented since there were no windows and I did not know what time it was or even if it was day or night.

Terrible headaches began to bother me on the second day of my detention. I was very nervous because of them. Loud sounds and noises were distressing to me. A lot of thoughts would spin in my head. I was also very scared of the prolonged detention because they had told me that I would be imprisoned for about 7 years. I did not know what to do. Sometimes I would realize that I was talking to myself. At one point I tried to look for the blade the two guys showed me – I had suicidal thoughts. But I failed to find it. I would often cry which was not typical for me and did not happen to me often before then. I no longer recognized myself and I was scared of the changes. When I was taken to the trial I would suddenly begin to laugh, for no reason, and I could not say anything. During the trial I suddenly burst into tears. I was ashamed of my tears and I felt stupid because of them, but I could not stop. I felt like I lost control of my emotions and I thought that I would go crazy.

After I was arrested, our house was searched, but they did not find any evidence to show that I stole anything from the destroyed buildings. I had already reached adulthood at the time of the arrest, however, my father was called to his office and asked to write a resignation letter against his own will otherwise he would be dismissed. I still suffer because of it – I felt and I still feel guilty for the fact that he got fired especially since at that time he was the only one working to support the family.

Ludmila Popovici: *When and how were you released from prison? How did you feel then?*

Roman: According to the court decision, I was to be released on April 13th. It was finally decided that I should be subjected to administrative punishment in the form of a fine, which I paid. My

father was waiting for me at the entrance. He seemed very nervous and worried. I asked for a cigarette, not really understanding what I was doing. I had secretly smoked for a while but until then I had never smoked in the presence of my father. He was surprised but gave me the cigarette without saying anything. It was only when I noticed my father's reaction that I became aware of the situation.

Ludmila Popovici: *We have known each other for some time. It has been almost four years since this all happened. We have made efforts to overcome various problems. We have had achievements, but there is still more work to be done.*

Roman: In those four days, that seemed to last an eternity, I lost about five kilograms. The first night home I slept very well because I was very tired. But in the following nights I started to have nightmares. I would often have dreams of the policemen, beatings, blood and other miseries. I would often see myself in the cell again. I would wake up scared, sweaty, with a racing heart beat and at first I would not even realize that it was just a dream. I would then be afraid of going back to sleep because the nightmares would sometimes repeat over and over again. It was probably due to this same reason that I had trouble going to sleep at night. I would try to fall asleep but memories connected with the arrest would come back again and again.

I was afraid of everyone around me. I still remember the first meetings with my colleagues... I was like a zombie – I could not speak, I was inhibited, and I felt isolated from everyone. The girls in my class would start to cry when they saw how much I had changed. I was always anxious, tense, and sensitive to every unexpected sound. If I saw a uniformed policeman on the street, it seemed like they were following me. I was afraid to leave my house alone, in fear that I would be arrested again. My parents were taking me to school, which made me feel very uncomfortable since I was already 18 years old. I would return home with a friend who was support-

ing me in any way that he could. On the eve of the final exams I was thinking about everything else but studying and passing the tests. Scenes of the terrible experience repeated in my head. Without reason, my case was left open for about a year. Through all that time I lived in great fear, afraid of being arrested again.

Because of the intense stress I experienced, my hepatitis continued to worsen and I was hospitalized for repeated treatments. I would sometimes get very dizzy; experience sudden blindness and would need to take a seat so that I would not fall down. I noticed that my eyesight worsened, especially when the object was far away. I found it difficult to focus and absorb new information. I had difficulties studying for the exams but I managed to pass them.

Ludmila Popovici: *What other radical changes, connected with the arrest, did you notice about yourself?*

Roman: Some of the changes still persist. I became more nervous more rapidly, and I am more sensitive to changes. Before the arrest I could solve conflicts much easier. I have now realized that those moments of terror brought certain consequences that I cannot escape. Shortly after the release I would flinch at any noise or movement. Suddenly I get scared until I go unconscious, although I am aware that my parents or other persons are nearby. Unfortunately I still have moments like these.

Ludmila Popovici: *What message would you want to bring to the public?*

Roman: I still feel injustice in regard to my experience. I do not think that I, or especially my father, are guilty of anything. I learned to love my family and freedom, and stay far away from the state institutions that I still do not trust. I urge everyone to be close to their loved ones and do not neglect any opportunity to spend time with them.















*These photos are taken from various media sources and web pages.
The images reveal clashes and confrontations between police and protesters,
street arrests and consequences of maltreatment that have occurred in police stations.
In some of them are our beneficiaries.*

**I WOULD LIKE TO BUILD A BEAUTIFUL FUTURE,
I WILL CONTINUE MY LIFE AND
I WILL FORGIVE EVERYBODY**

Denis, 23 years old

Ludmila Popovici: *Considering our experience and the international practices focused on supporting torture survivors, we have reached the conclusion that their lives are divided into two periods: “before” and “after” traumas. Such is the case of Denis, a young dreamer with philosophical views on life and the world around him. He agreed to share his experiences and opinions about the story of his life.*

Denis: I was a young man who loved to enjoy life, and had dreams, ideas and plans for the future. I was not much different from other teenagers, and I tried to be myself in every situation. After graduating from the lyceum in my home village, I went to the university where I quickly made many friends. Studying seemed interesting, especially since I had the desire to study information technology since I was a youth in school. I was very enthusiastic during my first year of studies. Time passes by very quickly when you are young and full of energy, especially when you have a lot of ideas and dreams on your mind! When you are 20 years old, you are busy daydreaming and desiring to learn more without the thought that something terrible might happen - something that could radically change the course of your life.

Ludmila Popovici: *But it happened... How did you become involved in this traumatic experience and how did you end up in police custody?*

Denis: In the second half of March 2009, my cell phone had been stolen. I wrote a complaint to the police because it was quite precious to me and held significant sentimental value. It was my first expensive and modern phone, and I received it as a gift from my parents as a result of being accepted to the university.

On April 9th, 2009, during the break between classes, I was in the university corridor when the district officer, who I knew already, approached me. He was wearing civilian clothes. He told me that the police had found several mobile phones and that I would have to follow him in order to recognize mine. I had no doubts about it since it was a real situation for me. Glad that I may get my phone back, I went with him in the car to the police station. There was one more person in the office.

As soon as I entered the room the district officer locked the door from the inside. This surprised me a bit and I found it very suspicious but I did not fully realize what was really happening. The policeman turned towards me, rolled his sleeves up and with fast moves hit me twice in the face with his fists. This was followed by other blows below the ribs, swearing, and questions such as “I am looking for your phone and you throw rocks at policemen? That`s your reward?”.

I was confused and I could not believe that the things that were happening to me were real. Then the other policeman joined him. They closed the blinds and began beating me with their fists all over my body, asking me who was among the organizers of the protests, how much they paid me to attend the protests and so on. I was very scared, but what could I answer? Not to mention that the answers did not seem to matter for them. Regardless of what I had to say, I knew that they would continue to beat me.

Then another officer in civilian clothes entered. He was very angry. They began showing me pictures from the protests, asking me the names of people that I could recognize. When I told them that I did not know anybody the second officer grabbed a chair and started to throw it at me but the other two stopped him.

All this time they did not only physically assault me, they also humiliated me – insulting me with various dirty words and threats. I was told that if I did not denounce anyone they would take me to the Commissariat, where my “dark days” would begin.

In about three hours I was transferred to the Riscani Police Station. A lot of guys were still detained there. I was asked to stand by them with my hands up, and face towards the wall with my jacket over my head so that I would not see what was happening around me. I stood like that for about 20 minutes before they took me to the third floor. Again, they showed me some pictures printed on an A4 sheet but this time they insisted that it was me in those images. After a very strong blow to my head, blood began pouring from my nose. The officers began yelling at me for making the carpet dirty. I was taken to a sink to wash myself and then given a cloth to wipe the blood from the floor in the office where I was beaten. I was shaking and thinking that it was a nightmare from which I would soon wake up. Unfortunately it was all real, and it was happening to me. Dozens of questions and horrible thoughts entered into my head. After some time had passed I was taken to another office where they took my fingerprints and some photographs. I then stood in the corridor with my hands up for another 20 minutes. Then they took me to some office, where the policeman that had picked me up from school was waiting for me with another person in civilian clothes. Under psychological pressure and fear, I was forced to write declarations stating that I threw rocks at the Parliament building and the Presidential Palace.

Ludmila Popovici: *So these self-accusations, made under pressure, affected you greatly? How did you feel physically? What other problems or changes connected with the traumatic experience did you notice about yourself?*

Denis: I felt really bad, my whole body ached and my head seemed to explode into pieces, it felt as heavy as lead. I was dizzy, full of bruises and blood, with my nose swollen. Those moments of fear, horror, shock, and all the evil things combined blocked my thoughts and movement. When the public lawyer saw me, he wanted to call an ambulance, but the policemen did not want that to happen. They said that there were no available ambulances at that time. I could not see my face in the mirror but I felt that my eyes were red and my nose swollen. Eventually, accompanied by two policemen, I was transported to Municipal Hospital Nr. 3, “Sfanta Treime” (Holy Trinity). Once I walked into the office for medical examination, the two policemen standing next to me started threatening and swearing at me. Luckily, the doctors were not influenced by their presence and they made the necessary examinations and sent me with an ambulance to the Emergency Hospital, where I was hospitalized.

I had a treatment course that lasted for two weeks. I was still dizzy, had headaches, and could not coordinate my movements. If I stood up, I would lose my balance and become nauseous. I was struggling with the feelings and perceptions that I had. I thought that I had a bad dream, but at the same time I understood that my situation was real and very difficult. I was trying to control myself and be calm, but it was not easy. There were four other people in my hospital room and for about a week, two policemen stood guard at the door. They were guarding me for fear that we might give an interview to the press or run away.

After being released, I continued medical treatment for one month for headaches, intracranial pressure and all the effects of a

brain concussion. However I was still not feeling very well. I would get tired quickly, it was hard to focus, and I often had dizziness and headaches. I was filled with fear and I felt like I was constantly among people. I was still experiencing moments of panic and depression that affected my university studies. I had difficulties because I missed a month, and my subsequent performance was reduced to a minimum due to my memory and concentration problems.

Ludmila Popovici: *These are absolutely typical reactions to traumas. I am glad you managed to get over them, even though it was not easy. I'd like you to share from your own experience, how does one overcome these situations, who helped you, who supported you, and what would be helpful for other people that might get in similar situations? What lessons did you learn and what are your future plans? What do you do in your spare time – what are your interests, occupations, hobbies, etc.?*

Denis: I think my ability to be self-confident helped me through those dark moments of my life. My friends were there for me and encouraged me to overcome the situation. Also a great contribution to restoring my general state has been the help from the professionals at the Memoria Center, who are still providing me medical and psychological care, for which I am very grateful.

I want to build a beautiful future-start a family, have a good job, and build a little house. Happiness for me is my family, my country, and the people around me. For me, to be happy is to be satisfied with my life and fulfilled spiritually.

Every single event in our lives impacts our minds. I think we have to accept these events as mere details of something greater that is called “life”. We should not waste time thinking about what we cannot have, because we risk losing out on other chances. We must learn to love life and everything that surrounds us. Only then

will we be happy and achieve what we want. We need to support each other and take care of others, that is what we humans are called to do.

I learned that when you have an active life, with different activities, with a good job and a stable group of friends, everything seems to solve itself and you do not feel the absence of minor things anymore. Music is what inspires me and gives me the necessary energy. It is part of my life and has a special place in my heart. I particularly like electronic dance music (EDM).

I understand that you can look into the future only if you are happy at the moment and you get your required dose of satisfaction. The future offers us many surprises and I would like them to be enjoyable. Despite the injuries and sufferings that I have experienced, I will continue my life and I will forgive everybody, because it`s my way of being, although I remember the experience with sadness and bitterness.

Ludmila Popovici: *We always learn a lot from our beneficiaries. They have been the driving force and mechanism that has kept the RCTV Memoria team motivated to continue working despite all of the difficulties. We will always stand by them, and support them each time it is necessary, so that they can continue their lives with dignity.*

I HAVE DEEPLY CHANGED BECAUSE OF SUFFERING, BUT IT WILL NOT THROW ME OUT OF MY WAY...

Radu, 24 years old

I was a keen and mischievous child, but when at school I was among the best students and I was also on the “board of honor”. I loved to sing, being inspired by my father who is a musician. But growing up, I discovered new things and new passions. I remember the first time I saw a computer: I was with my mother in the district center running various errands, when we entered a bank and I was faced with a young man working on the computer. It impressed me a lot and probably influenced me to study at the Faculty of Mathematics and Informatics after graduating from high school. At university I also was a good student. I was involved in various activities, playing football for the university team and sometimes practicing boxing as a hobby. Like any young man, I also had numerous plans for future, dreams that I wanted to accomplish. But all were swept away in a single day!

No, nobody forced me to go out at what time, on April 7th, 2009 in the center of Chisinau, to protest. That day I went as usual to the university, I met with friends, and as we were talking each of us was wondering: *“Why did the Communist Party emerged victorious with so many votes to the Democrats, if nobody within our circles voted for them?”*. We supposed that we have been deceived and that we simply had many questions which would never be answered. But I still did not know anything about the protest in downtown Chisinau. Immediately after school I went with a friend of mine to Buiucani market to buy something, and when we returned back by the trolley, all transports in front of us had stopped in a huge traffic jam.

We descended somewhere close to the University of Medicine and went by foot to the city center, where there were already a lot of people. We stopped and stood aside, being a bit confused and even shocked at what was happening. I did not understand why they were devastating the Presidency and the Parliament buildings; I saw the police and the crowd aggression. I saw how policemen threw rocks at the crowd and vice versa - to police. I was frozen, watching what was happening, until I realized that I was alone because my friend got lost in the crowd. The crowd chanted "*Refuse, Resist, I`m anti-communist!*", or "*Live, live, live and flourish Moldova, Transylvania and Wallachia!*"³... but some of them had already moved towards the Parliament building.

The crowd was already very agitated and throwing more and more stones and the police responded by throwing rocks and hitting them with sticks. In a little while we started seeing smoke coming out of the floors above and wondered: "*If no one from the crowd has entered the building, how can it be that in the top of building there has already emerged black smoke?*". The various thoughts swarmed my head, but I realized that this had been organized a time before. I walked behind the building of Parliament and saw that the door was broken and that there were various objects, mineral water, cigarettes, etc lying there.

After that, I saw how the tear gas grenades were thrown into the crowd as one fell not far from me. I ran away and started to feel my eyes burning as tears started to slide down my face. I saw that there was a full chaos installed and I decided to go home as the risk of being injured or somehow affected had become a real one. But when I was already in my dormitory, I could not sit quiet, thinking about what was happening in the center of our capital city. Thus, in the evening, along with my friend I decided to go see what was happening, but with a hope that things were quieter.

³ Rom: "Trăiască, trăiască, trăiască și înflorească Moldova, Ardealul și Tara Românească!"

By 9 PM, in the evening of the 7th of April, in the front of the Government` building there was improvised a stage with a microphone, where everyone willing or daring to do so, could express themselves, their opinion, etc. Knowing that the Parliament building was still vandalized, I came to the microphone. I do not know if anyone remembers me what evening, but my message was a peaceful one and I urged people to go to Parliament and Presidency and to stop those who ravaged state property. Among them there were also minors, some kids who might have not realized what they were doing.

Thus, I urged those present at the meeting: *“Let`s form a cordon and stop this wave of rampaging people, because the money from our families` pockets will be used to compensate for the damages caused”*. A group of students went on and tried to keep the crowd chest into Parliament, but failed because among them were some suspicious people, if just out of prison. In fact, I`ve seen such people during that day near the Parliament. One was with a dog and shouting something in Russian. I wondered to myself: *“He`s Russian and chanting against the Communists”*. Something did not add up and I thought that it might be a provoker.

For these reasons, I became even more suspicious in the evening, when I saw many strange people around the Parliament. I looked to the left, where they set fire to several chairs, papers and other things, and where a Christmas tree was also on fire. I went behind the Parliament, where there were firemen. I then alerted them to the fact that there was a fire in front of the building and they answered: *“We do not have any orders to do anything”*. I told them: *“But do you have to receive an order to put out a fire?”*. Everything seemed as scary as well as sinister and for this reason I decided to go home with my friend. It was already late at night, around 22.00. In the meantime we met a fellow from university, who had only spent his 1st year of university with us.

We all went by the street “Sfatul Țării”, in the direction of the street Bucharest. Out of a sudden, three people dressed in black appeared from the darkness and stopped me, as I was a step or two ahead of my friends. I had some photocopies and a book in English with me that my friend had given me before going into town. One of those people said, “*Give me those materials*”. I did not want to give them to him so suddenly he pulled back a stick and tried to hit me with it. I leaned down and ran to the right, where as I later discovered, was the Parliament` garage.

Also, only later I did find out that I had gotten into one of the circles of the raids the police formed to hunt young people from the downtown. Frightened, my friends fled towards the street “Sfatul Țării”. Once they realized that they had no chance to catch my friends, these people started running again after me. In front of me, from the garage of Parliament, two other people appeared and the other three coming from behind hit me and tried to restraint me and to immobilize me with handcuffs. I fought back, trying to defend myself and escaped from their hands. I managed to run for about 10 m, but another person who got out from the garage hit me on the head with a stick.

I fell down as they began dragging me by the hands and feet in the garage of the Parliament. I cannot remember any details, as I lost my consciousness. I regained it already in the garage, next to five other guys who, like me, were lying face down on the cold and dirty floor. They pulled my belt, tied me and started to beat me with what they had. Afterwards, when another person was also brought and slammed down against the floor, they closed the doors and started hitting us mercilessly. At a certain point, all of them (about 6-7 aggressors) approached us, looked at me and said, “*This is the most “clever”. And how did he try to escape from us?*”. And they started to hit me with their feet on all of my body. Later they assigned each to one person and continued to beat all of us.

They began to mock and humiliate us with an unspeakable hatred. We were shouted at “*Head to the right!*”, and when turning our heads, with our face lying down – we were kicked over the head from the other side. “*Head to the left!*” – the same kick from the opposite side. We were cruelly beaten, then picked up one by one and pushed inside the trunk of a car. They shouted constantly, ordering us to keep our heads down, and if we lifted up our eyes – we got a blow from his stick or foot. I was the last one to be dragged and they pushed me in the car where there was practically no place. So, the policemen pushed me, hitting me with the car door over the head, until it was closed and locked. While moving, the driver mocked us, by suddenly turning the car to get us more stressed.

When they stopped the car, we did not know where we were, nor where we were going. I asked what would happen with us and they responded, “We are going to shoot you!”. We were in a state of panic, scared and desperate, convinced that it will be so. We began saying the Lord`s Prayer, because none of us knew what was going to happen with us and even thought that those were our last moments of life. But as we later realized, we had been brought to the Police station Buiucani and were ordered to go up to the second floor. And while we climbed the stairs, we were struck again by several policemen, arranged in two rows up to the second floor and equipped with shields, helmets and bats.

As we walked they beat us in whichever way they could. At the 2nd floor we were pushed with our faces against the wall. I remember someone came into the corridor and yelled: “*Why are you standing up? On knees!*”. Then swore at us and hit us brutally. Soon after, another person came and again shouted: “*Get up on your feet!*”. And again we were hit. We were moved from the right to the left within that corridor several times and over and over again were we struck by whoever wished to humiliate us and laugh at us.

Eventually one of the boys started feeling very bad, said that he had heart problems and requested some water, to which a policeman replied with malice: “Maybe you need a bedroom as well?”. We were forced to sit on our knees on the cold concrete floor for 4-5 hours, until we were all taken to interrogation in various cabinets. There was a boy whose name was also Radu next to me, who was maybe more beaten than me, because he argued with the policemen and questioned them several times: “Why drag? Why hit me?”. But that only made him be hit even harder. I eventually convinced him to shut up because what he was doing did not lead to anything good. In the morning it came our turn to be questioned. I could not keep myself on my feet and I moved only with the support of Radu and of the other boys who were with me.

After being questioned, I was told that they will arrest me for 10 days to which I just asked, “Why?”. The investigator asked if while they caught me, I had something with me. I said I did not, but anyway I had to sign everything I was told, without being allowed to read it. I was asked what I did in the period between the 5-7 April, what I do usually, etc. I told them that I am studying at the State University; that I`m singing at parties, that I`m a quiet person who does not bring any damage to the society, and I did nothing, I just saw people coming out of Parliament with TV, chairs, or other things. A policeman asked, “*Do you sing at parties?*”. And I said, “*Yes*”. “*Then sing me something about the police*”. I did not know what to do, when I could not open my mouth, but I had to. I found the strength and sang a song of Alexander Lozanciuc, which chorus goes like this: “*The policeman as he wishes, so your life sanctifies / 3 times you get punished and once you had mercy*”.

He smiled and said, “*Yes, you have been punished*”. Afterwards he laughed a little and said, “But I will have mercy, and I will let you go home”. He then ripped the documents made on my case, helped me to go down to the ground floor, where I went to the bathroom to

wash the blood from my face. I then went out after my belongings were returned to me. The cell phone had broken screen but it was still working so I connected it and I dialed my best friend who came and helped me get to the emergency hospital.

My parents heard only later about what happened with me, when I was already at the emergency hospital. When I was still within the Police Commissariat, I asked a police officer to allow me to call home to tell my parents not to worry about me. He seemed more humane and had not r hit us when he passed though the corridor, and even gave me his phone in a discrete way and I dialed the number of my father. When he spoke on the phone, he said something like: *“Good evening, I`m from the Police ...”*, but as it was about 3 AM, my father thought that it was a joke and hung up.

After this trial of my life I have had several health problems. I have worsened vision; headaches often torment me and intensify especially after doing exercise or after emotional effort. I benefited from support from Memoria Center through counseling, treatment, medication and psychological support. Also, my family and some friends supported me both materially and morally. But I`ve changed a lot and I realize this. I became irritable and sometimes I do not even recognize myself. I lost interest in many things which I did previously. I abandoned boxing because of worsening health. Sometimes I play football, compose music and sing. I really like music.

I believe that my future will be linked to music. I`ll try to make something beautiful and useful to people. I do not think I`ll ever try to be involved in politics and do not even watch TV shows with “political games”. I don`t believe that there are opportunities for the youth to really engage in politics in our country. I`m still disappointed by the political leaders of the country and what they do for the future of our citizens.

WHO CARES ABOUT US?

Rodion, 25 years old

On the day of April 7th, 2009, I was a student at the State University, studying at the history and philosophy faculty. I dreamt about a better future in a country of stability and prosperity because I could feel a desire for change within society. The elections of April 5th were anticipated by many young individuals that would vote for the first time, and a very strong desire for change persisted. Along with thousands of other young people, I was ready to get out of the lethargy which encased our fear of repression and begin to act. I did not only have motivation, but also blind trust for the opposition leaders and their promises that exalted our young and naive hearts.

On the morning of April 7th I woke up early, and with many other colleagues, went to protest against a fraud which has not been elucidated even years after the event. It was not the first time I took part in a anti-communist protest, but I have never seen so many other young people protesting before. “*Mămăliga*⁴ exploded” and demanded change through the voice of tens of thousands. But after hours of protests we felt the indifference and disgrace of the communist government, whose representatives did not come to speak to us. Their attitude brought anger to the crowd. No, it was not only the fault of the “masked” officers and provocateurs. It simply was the “last” drop in the glass. There were many of us and we felt too strong to retreat so we decided to achieve “change” by all means. Like many others, I was too “carried away” to think of consequences. No, I am not proud of the stones that I threw, but I

⁴ **Mămăligă** (Romanian pronunciation: [məmə'liɡə]) is a mush out of yellow maize flour, traditional in Romania and Moldova. It is similar to the Italian polenta.

will never feel sorry that I was one of the protesters, although I was ashamed to admit it immediately after the events. Perhaps those that were not students during that period and have never tried to survive a month with, 20 lei or have never seen their helpless friends beaten by the police only for the fact that they celebrated March 27th ⁵, will not understand our behavior on April 7th. I do not feel the need to justify my actions to anyone, but instead I will tell you the conclusion that I made on that day: the both sides, be it the communists or anticommunists, took advantage of the situation in the National Square.

The communists found a good reason to discredit the opposition and the anticommunists had a more serious reason to accuse the government of terror. Regardless of what they earned back then, we – the protesters have lost the most. We were blamed by most of society for the destruction of the main government institutions. Some of us were arrested and subjected to unimaginable treatment for a society that finds itself on the European continent. For days and nights we were tortured and then subjected to a trial in the purest communist style within the police station, where they brought judges and prosecutors. The infamous “troika`s” were reborn. But more terrible than the physical torture was the psychological one – with threats, humiliation and destruction of human dignity. For most of us the inner wounds have been very difficult to heal and the chances are that we might never fully recover. Threats of execution, life imprisonment, and sexual harassment created a huge emotional imbalance, which made room for various nervous disorders, phobias, stereotypes, fear, and probably hate as well. In just a few days we learned to see the world differently. In addition to this, some friends betrayed us and we learned not to trust anyone. I realized that horror movies can become reality for each of us when

⁵ On March 27 - April 8, 1918, Bessarabia united with Romania. It was the beginning of a historical repair, which continued with the union of Bukovina, from 3 -15 November, 1918 and ended on 1 December, 1918 when Transylvania, Banat and Crişana united with Romania.

we get carried away, become naive, and forget about responsibility towards ourselves. However we got rid of the “Mioritic” spirit and the humiliated attitude of the “bowed head” free from the blade of “swords⁶”.

Our life since we were released from the arrest can be divided into two periods. The first one was characterized by much hope and some small changes within society, which made us optimistic about the future. Communists had been removed from the government, and the leaders of the opposition parties were now in charge. We had so much trust in these individuals and we were very disappointed to see their subsequent behavior. They promised us, the ones tortured in April 2009, to punish the guilty, but all we are left with are those empty promises. Well, there were also discussions about a monument and once a year the former anti-communist parties invite us to gain some political capital. Meanwhile, the individuals that tortured me and my friends were able to advance in their careers, receive bonuses for their salaries, and who knows, maybe even mistreat others as well.

The second period – the disappointments have not come to an end. Deception has been subsequently replaced by shock, as we could not believe what we would see on TV. And then, slowly, indifference began to rise in our hearts. We were shocked to see how the political leaders, who we believed in, are equally indifferent to our future as the communists were a few years ago. These realities came as an anesthesia to our views on politics and the so-called pro-European path of our country.

We learned that our own future is more important than the country and its path, so some of us decided to leave the country. Some have already left while others dream to do the same and make efforts to leave. We ended up not dreaming about a bright future in

⁶ “Bowed head sword does not cut it, but never sees the sun!” (proverb)

our own country and. Not because we only expect to receive without contributing, as we are accused by those with positions, good wages and MP arrogance. We love this country and did not wait for somebody to put something inside our pockets, we did not hope for charity. We expected to see clear opportunities so that we would be able to build a stable and secure future here, but we did not receive that.

Now, nearly four years after the nightmare we went through, I wonder, along with other young people who have suffered: was it really worth risking our health and life for nothing? Some of us did not fully recover physically or psychologically. But who cares about us?

Ludmila Popovici: *Rodion`s story made me ponder for a while about one of the features of human beings – indifference. I wanted to read more about it on the internet and when I did a Google search I had a pleasant surprise: some time ago I had posted a few thoughts somewhere on the internet and today I found them while someone was quoting an “anonymous” author. It was about indifference: “Do not be afraid of the enemies, the worst they can do is kill you; do not be afraid of your friends, worst case they will betray you; fear the indifferent – they neither kill nor betray, but with their tacit consent, murder and treason are committed”.*

Unfortunately these words reflect the state of things related to April 7th, 2009. The indifference of those from the top levels of society, regardless of the nature of their power, slowly but surely destroy any hope for a better future for the young generations of Moldova. It`s regrettable.

WE CAN`T REGRET OUR PAST; WE NEED TO LEARN FROM IT

Alexandru, 26 years old

Ludmila Popovici: *Alexandru is one of the people that greatly impressed me during the troubled period of April 2009. He was the second of these cases registered at RCTV Memoria, and he came to our office with another student who went through the same terrible nightmare. He was among the first of the young men that were maltreated and was brought to us by his lawyer for medical assistance and documentation on the consequences of torture. Alexandru was waiting in the corridor, he looked very shy, and his eyes expressed traces of the enormous sufferings he recently went through. I approached him thinking of ways to initiate a discussion in order to find out as many details as possible about what happened in the police stations. I tried to be calm and smile even though I was nervous and my heart was pounding. The second week after the terror of April 7th had begun and the situation was very tense in society. Fear dominated everything. We were also terrified but we told him that Memoria is a safe place and we would try to help him. We talked for more than one hour and he helped me understand the drama he experienced, as well as what really happened during those days. His stories helped me create a “checklist” of traumas suffered, which was then used for subsequent interviews with other victims, because we were registering many beneficiaries daily, and we only had a few people on the Memoria team.*

Alexandru was a fine man, with principles and a well-defined value system. He graduated from the “V. Guja” Gymnasium from

Plop-Stiubei Gymnasyum, in the Causeni rayon and the Lyceum later on, both with great success. When he was asked to participate in the development of this book, he agreed although reliving the memories is not pleasant for him. His life before the traumatic event was completely different.

Alexandru: Once admitted to the State Agrarian University of Moldova (UASM), a new stage in my life began. I continued my studies, motivated by the desire for continuous development and the acquisition of a specialization that would allow me not only to pass through life but also to assert myself as a professional. Studying kept me busy but I still had time for other useful activities. I loved reading and I had a particular passion for programming books, philosophy and history. The good results would always make me happy and I tried to aim higher and higher, but I would not always succeed. I always tried to learn more and more because I had the impression that there was always insufficient time.

In my spare time I used to organize interesting debates with my colleagues, sometimes adding a bit of humor, but it was always enjoyable and it covered a large range of topics – religion, humanities, sports and history. I now perceive that environment I was in as both pleasant and an important generator of spiritual tranquility. We always tried to discover the beautiful world around us. Amusing and incredible! We often discussed the values of contemporary humans and we would always conclude that they should not be directed towards the satisfaction of personal needs. The social contribution is also important, serving the community and the entire society we are a part of. It is important to view the society as a whole, not as a range of elements.

Despite the socio-political situation, I viewed the future with confidence and hope. I thought that tomorrow would be better than yesterday, more intense, rewarding and safe. It would be a lie if I

said that I could not express my views, since I would always share my thoughts without fear, or worry that something I said would damage my image. I never hid my distaste for communists, the authoritarian regime, and stupidity, but after what happened I think I should have done just that. I found it amusing and utopian that our dean would never forget to mention in every speech how caring and generous those who governed us were.

Ludmila Popovici: *So, despite the communist government you had hope that you would succeed in life. You had hope for building a career based on your strengths and abilities. And it was all ruined in one single day?*

Alexandru: That`s what happened on April 9th, 2009, when eight people from our faculty were arrested. It was just after 11:00 AM, when we had come out from a test. I was in front of the university building with some of my colleagues when suddenly a few civilians approached us. Later on I found out that they were policemen. But even if I had known this earlier I still would have stayed in the same place. Why run if I was not guilty of anything? But what happened next was like a sudden storm. Everything happened so fast. They grabbed me by my shoulders and forced me into a car nearby. Other colleagues of mine that were nearby were also arrested. We were transported to Râșcani Police Station in three different cars. As far as I remember there were eight of us total. They took our phones from the start, after they ordered us to turn them off. Thus I could not inform anyone that I had been arrested. All of us were taken to the third floor of the police station. Only there did they ask me my name. They were calling us into an office and I happened to be the first. They beat me so that I would admit that I went to the protest and threw rocks at the policemen. Their hits were aimed at my head, my face, and my stomach. I did not deny that I went to the protests or shouted slogans, but why would I admit that I threw rocks if that did not happen? I told them I passed through the

square, like everybody else interested in the situation. I admitted that I shouted slogans with the others and explained that I usually pass through the Center in order to reach my cousin`s home. But they did not care about anything I told them...

Of the three police officers who were there, two continued taking turns at beating me. At one point one of them complained that his fists hurt and he looked through the wardrobe for something else to hit me with. He showed his regret once he realized it was empty, and then continued to beat me with his fists. One of the policemen in the office was a bit gentler. He did not beat me at all. He would calmly tell me to share whatever I knew about other protesters and claimed that it would be much better for me that way. They read us a few articles from the Penal Code. According to one, we could be sentenced to 7 to 9 years imprisonment, while the other indicated a sentence of 8 to 15 years. The officers said, "It`s over for you. We have videos from the protest and we will find everybody!".

The torture lasted an hour or two, and I have never in my life felt that humiliated, scared, and helpless. Then the officers took us to the basement, and put us in a cell of about 3 by 4 meters, where around seven or eight people were held. I was there with three more colleagues that were arrested at the faculty, but other than that they were all strangers, including homeless people. The night was very cold and we stayed close to one another in order to keep ourselves warm. I was held there until the second day around 6:00 PM. Food was not given to any of us. As for water – they would bring us tap water in a plastic container which did not seem very clean. All of us would drink directly out of it, one at a time, getting over our disgust and/or fear of catching a disease.

Friday evening I was transferred to the General Police Station. I was taken to a small cold cell with twelve other people. Only one of my colleagues out of the eight was in the same cell as me. There was

a wooden bench on the wall, with no bedding. All of us could not fit on it, so we could only sit. I felt really dirty because I had been wearing the same clothes for several days in a row and there was no way for me to wash them or get others. I was not used to that. I spent two nights there and they released me on Sunday because the 72 hours deadline expired and they had no reason to detain me.

Ludmila Popovici: *Much has been spoken and written about the dramatic events of April 7th, 2009. But many people still do not understand the consequences of such an experience for a young individual like you. You have had some time to analyze and understand the things that are happening with your life. Could you tell us about the changes that you have observed?*

Alexandru: I have observed significant changes especially in regard to the psychological aspect. Basically it was my first experience of this kind of humiliation, shame, and fear. It was my first contact with the Moldovan justice system and the so-called “institutions of public order” responsible for guarding citizen`s rights. But who am I anyway? Am I not the citizen the state has to defend? Am I not the citizen whose parents are paying the taxes so that these “supermen” can get their salaries and pensions?

Desperation – the first feeling I had when they arrested me. Fear is something common among those who arrived there, and probably one of the purposes. But the way I have been humiliated made me inhibit myself even more. These mixed feelings lasted a few months with a strong intensity, but eventually they became weaker, though they persist as painful and shameful memories about an event that “shook” me more than anything in my life so far.

It is not pleasant to talk about my health problems. But beyond bruises and other injuries, it all came with powerful stress, fear mixed with humiliation, as well as the fact that we have been fooled by those that promised change. From all these experiences the fear for the so-called defenders of justice and order had diminished. I already have no fear of them but I hope that time will heal everything.

Ludmila Popovici: *You graduated from college, life goes on. How are you overcoming this situation? What are your plans for the future?*

Alexandru: I graduated but I cannot say that I have been encouraged or helped in any way. I felt no compassion from some of my professors or university colleagues. When I returned, everyone seemed very silent. It seemed like a forbidden topic or maybe they were afraid, I don't know. But one thing is certain – everybody ignored the events that followed the 7th of April. Perhaps that attitude helped me to get over the suffering so that I did not have time to return to those terrible feelings.

Yes, it's been a while and I have begun to slowly return to my life before that nightmare. I hope that I have succeeded since I do not have those feelings of humiliation, fear, and shame as strongly as during the first period after the arrest. Everything seemed to fade away naturally. An unexplainable fear persists in regard to the eventual ordure of the authorities in cases of other public gatherings or protests.

“Freedom, same as the sky, has to be conquered” – this quote should fill my heart but unfortunately it doesn’t. It is rather a disappointment. I have always stood for freedom when it comes to activities that do not go against the law, morals, and common sense. I have mostly opted for the freedom of speech. But when as a result of expressing yourself you are beaten and kept under arrest with no consequences for those guilty – it seems to portray the end of a democratic path for the state. And the stupidity, fear and servility for the system begins; a system that instead of defending its people, cruelly punishes them.

The traumas I suffered caused me unnecessary dark thoughts, despair, and inhibitions, but also made me understand and view a lot of things more simply. I learned that even if you are a good man you can still be punished by our blind justice. Time calmed me and gave me confidence in the future, shattered my phobias and made me feel free again, even though I am not the same I used to be before. I have a job, and I sustain myself, but I still do not make great plans for the future.

NOW I PREFER TO BE IN SOLITUDE

Radu, 34 years old

Ludmila Popovici: *This was one of the cases registered by Memoria thanks to the prosecutor's reference, who was studying the case of torture. It was the fall of 2009 when I received a call from a prosecutor and assumed it would be connected to a case from April. I was speechless when I found out that the case had happened in May, after so much fuss and media coverage of the torture cases from April. I could not believe that in the police station, that had been visited by so many officials after the April events, such horrors happened again. A reconstruction procedure was underway in order to improve the detention conditions and have something to report to foreign institutions. But for a person arrested without cause the conditions became somewhat worse because in addition to beatings, humiliation, and insufficient food and water they also had to breathe the air with containing paint and solvents.*

His drama made us understand that the painted walls and legal reforms would not change the situation regarding torture.

Radu: I graduated from the Law Faculty and worked as a lawyer for a company in Chisinau for some time. I was a daily commuter and I could barely sustain myself. Meanwhile, I got married and was expecting a child. Since my salary was low and I could not sustain my family, I had to find temporary work abroad and I returned exactly on the day my son was born. I could not be there for my wife during her pregnancy or when she gave birth, but I loved them a lot and we had a lot of plans for the future! We lived

in a village near Vadul lui Vodă⁷ and I wanted to work to provide a decent and happy life for my family. We had dreamt about having a second child, as it is common at this young age for a loving husband and father.

I am the kind of person who wants everything planned and organized in advance. I don't like when someone messes up my plans. I also do not like unexpected changes. But it was not meant to be! All of my misfortunes began on the day of May 26th, 2009, when a grenade was thrown into the garden of the Mayor of our village, and exploded. Although nobody was hurt, he called the police and blamed me for everything since we had a disagreement with him prior to that. I was renting a pond for a long period and the mayor insisted that I terminate the lease before it was due to expire.

Thus, on the second day, May 27th, at 2:50 PM, I was called by the district inspector who invited me in for questioning about the case. In a few minutes several people from the Criuleni District Police entered the office and presented a warrant to search my home. When I left with them I noticed three cars outside, with ten to twelve policemen, in both uniforms and plainclothes. I was escorted to my house, and most of the officers entered with me while two or three remained at the entrance. Policemen rummaged through my entire house and then searched the auxiliary buildings, attics and garden. My wife, as well as my son, was crying. I was taken to the cars and driven to the Central Police Station in Chisinau for more "questioning". But when I arrived at the police station they told me that I was arrested for 72 hours as a suspect in the case. Since they had no other place to take me to, I was brought to the Central Police Station in Chisinau, where I was locked in a cell with one other person. I was unable to sleep all night, overwhelmed by thoughts; I knew I was not guilty and I was sure that they would release me.

⁷ A small town near Chisinau

The next day was Saturday. In the morning, two policemen from Criuleni took me out of the cell and led me towards the second floor. As we were walking through the corridor a policeman that noticed us said, "Is this the guy from Criuleni? Leave him because our chief wants to talk to him". I was brought to an office and five more people joined us after a while. The policemen from Criuleni left and the newcomers began the interrogation but the questions were formulated as if I was the one guilty. For example: "*Where did you get the grenade from?*", "*Who gave it to you?*", "*Why did you do it?*" and so on. At first they just asked but then they started beating me because they did not like my answers. They asked me to admit that I was the one who threw the grenade.

They were hitting my head and back with their fists and plastic bottles filled with water. They asked me "*Do you like beer?*". I told them that I drink beer once in a while and a strike followed. Then they repeated the question a few times and each one was followed by a strike with the fist or the bottle, saying, "*Consider that each time you get hit you drink a beer*". I think they were referring to the dizziness that followed each of the stronger hits. Several times they took me to the window and threatened to throw me out and then shoot me because of an "attempt to evade." Then the chief that wanted to talk to me arrived (he wasn't the main chief, but a lower-ranked one). He also asked me to admit that I threw the grenade "for personal reasons", because my father was the former mayor of the village and did not have a good relationship with the current one. He hit me twice over the ears with both his hands at once, after which my ears hurt and rang for a long time. He threatened me that if I did not admit that I was guilty they would beat me to death or would shoot me and my mother would cry. The chief then said, "*I give you ten more minutes to make him admit everything*" and then he left. The policemen began to beat me much harder. I sat on

my knees in front of them and begged them not to beat me because I was not guilty and had nothing to admit. But they laughed at me and continued to hit and threaten me using insulting and humiliating words.

It lasted until late evening, and when I was finally taken back to my cell I was exhausted after the beatings and hungry, because it was the second day that I had not eaten anything. I do not remember that night but the morning of the second day (Sunday) I was taken to the same office and they interrogated, threatened and beat me again. They showed me electric cables and told me that they would apply those to my testicles, that they would tie something heavy to my testicles, or put me in a cell with homosexuals, etc. One of the policemen hit my hand with a chair and one of the chair's legs broke from the hit. Then they told me that I would have to buy another chair since I was the one who broke it. I was very scared because I realized that they could do anything to me, and that I might not get out alive. All day long they repeated the same questions many times, followed by strikes. My only desire was for them to leave me alone and take me back to my cell. After two days of beatings, two sleepless nights, and completely without food and water, I was very confused, powerless, and I felt that I might accept the chance to admit to everything.

Monday morning I was put in a car and taken to the Criuleni Police Station, where I was to accept the guilt. On the way, they threatened that they could take me out and shoot me. They said that they could declare that I tried to run away so that they would not be punished. When we arrived I noticed representatives from Moldova 1, the National TV Station. I don't know who called them. Before the questioning I was allowed to talk with my lawyer, who was a public lawyer assigned from the office. When I informed him on what I intended to do, he was shocked and told me that I would risk to be condemned for no reason. He advised me to tell the truth

about the things that had happened in the police station: the beatings and threatening. Although I was afraid of their revenge, when it was my turn to talk I told them all that had happened. The reporters were immediately taken out of the room. Then I was taken to the Criuleni Court. There the judge listened to what I had to say but did not write or add anything to the files. By court decision the arrest was extended for 10 days and then for one month.

Meanwhile, from the Central Police Station (CPS) I was taken to the Criuleni Police Station. The chief told me that I had to admit that I was guilty and that he didn't want to lose his job because of me. He was dictating to me the things to declare, such as *"I was by the Mayor's fence. I threw it like that", etc.* They were also asking me to show how everything happened as part of the reconstruction, so that they could record everything and then release me. He told me that if I were to admit to being guilty nothing would happen to me since no one was hurt. With the help of other people they also tried to convince my parents that pleading guilty would be the best for everyone. Thus, without any fault, I remained detained for three weeks at the CPS and Penitentiary Nr. 13. The conditions there were miserable. I was released but not acquitted of the charges. For three more months I was not allowed to leave the village. Later I was acquitted due to lack of evidence. The guilty individual was never found.

Shortly after my release I was diagnosed with lung disease and underwent an intense treatment for a long time. I still don't feel well. My immunity is weaker and I get sick quite often. I cannot work as before. Often I cannot sleep or wake up early, thinking of the horrible events I have been through. I would like to forget it all, to erase it from my memory, but I fail...

I became much more sensitive to insults and injustices than before the arrest. Possible failures disturb me. I find it harder to make decisions. I used to be more sociable – I had more friends and we used to meet. Now I prefer to stay alone. I take my dog and I go somewhere out in the fields or the forest where there are no people. That is where I feel most comfortable.

I think that because of what happened to me, my parents, my child and my wife had to suffer as well. But they are the ones who have helped, supported and encouraged me. I don't know how I would have survived without this support.

I currently work as a driver on a route to the suburbs. But I feel very tense and stressed when driving. It's a temporary job which helps us survive. In my spare time I like to take care of the flowers in the garden. We also have some beautiful birds which bring me much joy. In fact, I plan to create a business connected with agriculture. I like the village life, working with the land and dealing with animals. It makes me calm and confident.

But I have concluded that Moldova is not the place where personal security is guaranteed. Anything could happen to anybody, anywhere, even if you don't break the law. My view is that suspected individuals should not be tortured. The arrest and accusations should be based on arguments and evidence. In Moldova you don't have many chances to prove your innocence, even if you know the laws. My lawyer, for example, could observe violations of various laws but could not do anything. The entire system needs a change and so does the mentality. Such cases also require the involvement of the media and of various associations.

I learned that in situations such as these, when it seems that life doesn't have a meaning, when everything around is all in ruins and complete chaos, it is very important to have a group of people that will give you support and encourage you to believe in yourself and move on.

Ludmila Popovici: *At various events and public meetings I often argued how important it is for torture victims to have a network of individuals able to support them, be it relatives, friends, institutions, lawyers, counselors and/or other professionals that would indeed help them overcome the difficulties they face. We tried to be an important element of the network that decided to help Radu. We are happy for his accomplishments and positive changes and we will strive to be there for him whenever he needs and for as long as it is required.*

TWO BROTHERS AND A MOTHER`S HEART

Constantin, 26 years old,

Adrian, 33 years old

Ludmila Popovici: *About three years ago, on an autumn day of 2010, I received a call on my cell phone from an unknown number. I thought I would respond quickly and then continue with work because I was busy working on some urgent documents. When I picked up the phone I heard a warm but trembling voice say “Excuse me, I am the mother of two tortured boys. A journalist gave me your number and told me that you could help me...”.*

Hearing these words I realized it might be a serious case. I had a discussion with this wonderful lady the same day, delaying other plans I had. I am also able to work on documents while I am home – late in the evening or during the weekend. When she came into the office I saw a pleasant lady with clear blue eyes, who tried to sketch a smile and politely apologized for insisting to meet me the same day, explaining that she doesn` t live in Chisinau and had to return home. Some people are like this – they do not want to bother anyone, although they need to seek much needed help as soon as possible. She even told me, “I have had your number for a while but I only decided to call you today”. I smiled and calmed her down a bit, but the things I was about to hear shocked me!

The drama of this family began in August 2007, and through these three years this lady knocked on various doors for help. But the life of her family transformed into an endless nightmare. After a while I met one of her sons. Even though I was already familiar with numerous problematic cases, the story of this young man

impressed me very much. When I asked him if he would want to share his story in a book, he hesitated at first, but then he accepted arguing that he doesn't want such crimes to ever happen again.

Constantin: Before this nightmare we had a rather quiet life. I was busy with my studies at the university, I practiced sports, and I received excellent results at various competitions. I spent my leisure time with my loved one, who was also a student. All my plans were directed towards establishing an accomplished family with adorable and bright children.

I was an optimist and my life was moving in the right direction since my family was always very important to me. Working hard, I was achieving everything that I wanted, and I had high hope and great dreams that would slowly become a reality. I had plans of marriage, I was surrounded by friends, and everything was going well. I thought that after graduation I would find a good job and be an individual who contributes to the development of my country. But on a beautiful summer day everything was ruined. On August 11th, 2007, at 4:00 PM I was arrested. I was visiting my girlfriend's brother and I was waiting for her because we agreed to meet there. While he went to a nearby store, somebody rang the doorbell. I opened it because I thought it was my girlfriend. Indeed, it was her, but she was accompanied by two individuals in civilian clothes, and they grabbed me, twisted my hands behind my back, and tied them with my own belt, which they removed brutally. Later she told me that the policemen met her outside, and insisted that she follow them and ring the doorbell. I later learned that she and my brothers were also arrested. My girlfriend was also taken to the police station and interrogated but by midnight, she was released. Her brother was interrogated as well, and then asked to tell them where I lived and where I kept the keys, so that they could go there and search my house. Then they released him around 3:00 in the morning.

Meanwhile I was escorted to the Botanica Police Station. No one explained the reason for my arrest but I later found out that it was connected to a woman`s murder, who I knew from among my friends. I was taken to an office where I saw maybe seven or eight policemen. As I was knocked on the floor with my face down, hands behind my back, a cop grabbed them and pulled them towards my shoulders, which caused terrible pain in my joints. I was interrogated and beaten for hours. They hit me with both their hands over both my ears at least ten times. On top of this, every officer considered it their duty to punch my head or slap my ears. Since most of them were right-handed, my left ear suffered the most, and it was red and swollen. I was hit many times with a baton across my back and over the soles of my feet. They put a woman`s stocking on my head to humiliate me even more. They put me against the wall and hit me in the chest, saying that if I touched the wall they would hit me harder. They hit me with their fists in the heart area, and below my ribs on the right side. I received several blows on the head by their guns and plastic bottles filled with water, which were rock hard. I remember falling unconscious a few times, and in order to wake me up I was splashed with cold water, and they would step on my foot by the joints, in a very painful area. They hit my chest with their feet many times and I could hardly breathe. They would basically hit my whole body with everything they could find, and they would use the toes of their boots to hit my knees. They asked me to admit that I committed the murder with my brother and to give a declaration against him. They put a gas mask on me, closed the valves, and blew cigarette smoke into it. They would leave me like that until I would start to suffocate. I was given short breaks that lasted a few minutes, but I could not fully recover. My whole body ached, I could not control my body properly, I could not see well, I was dizzy, and nauseous. I could not understand what was happening. I was exhausted, scared and confused. My mouth was dry. I was very thirsty but I did not receive any water, because they were asking me to plead guilty first.

It lasted all night long. In the morning I was transferred to the Central Police Station, where I was beaten again, particularly on the head. They kept me there without any sort of medical assistance although I was very sick, and my entire body was bruised. I was put in a room in the basement with no windows. One morning during a visit I could not get out of my bed so they began kicking me with their feet. The blows were so strong that for nearly two weeks I could not sit down and moved around with great difficulty. I still have pain in the sacral region. They took me to the interrogator for questionings every two or three days. They would place their pistol against my head and threaten that if I did not plead guilty they would shoot me and throw me through the window with a heroin package in my pocket. Then they could declare that I was a drug addict that tried to escape.

I was terrified by what was happening to me. I cannot describe the state in which I was in back then. I cannot forget how they would suspend me between two tables by a bar that went through my hands and feet which were tied together. They would leave me like that for hours and beat me continuously. One time when they put me down I could not walk on my numb feet so they began beating me again until I started walking.

This nightmare repeated almost every day. I was ruined both physically and emotionally and had no desire to live. After 45 days they transferred me to the Penitentiary Nr. 13. I could not feel my hands arms or the rest of my body after all I had been through. The cellmates helped me dress and walk, were encouraging, and gave me moral support. The detention period was extended because they accused me of storing the drugs that they found the day they searched the apartment I was renting. The search was made in both my absence, and the absence of my brother. The landlord was not there either, since he insisted for two witnesses to be called. There could not have been any drugs there, everything was staged. Also,

during the search they took away things such as two cell phones, a laptop, and a significant amount of money, which were not included in the record or listed as stolen, therefore we did not get them back.

In total I was detained for eleven months and was finally released by the court on 17th of July, 2008. I lost about 10 kilograms in weight and I have not recovered yet. My health issues are obvious and sometimes I wonder how I manage to survive with these traumas.

Meanwhile I learned that while I was being beaten by the police my brother was held in the office next door and he could hear everything because the doors were left opened intentionally. He was forced to admit that he committed the murder by being threatened that I would otherwise be mutilated by the beatings. Eventually he pleaded guilty because he could not bear my screams and cries. My brother has been charged based on those forced confessions and will be staying in prison for 25 years.

He is still in prison although he has no fault and he tries to prove that in court. I, on the other hand, feel guilty. Not guilty for the things they were incriminating me for. I had nothing to do with that crime. I feel guilty for the fact that I did not resist the beatings and the torture I was exposed to. I feel guilty for my screams and cries of pain. For this reason my brother pleaded guilty for a crime he did not commit and now is in prison.

But I have great support from my family. I have support from my relatives as well. My parents do not believe the things me and my brother are blamed for, they give their support, and we will fight for justice as long as we have to. If I had to choose between my family and career in the future I would choose my family. I feel how much they suffer; I feel all their troubles, their hearts in pain, and see their pensive faces.

The greatest sadness is that I was so inspired when I had just begun my studies. After my graduation I wanted to do something useful for my country, but unfortunately I was disappointed. Day by day I am more convinced that we live in a country which is corrupt and full of misery. I overcome my situation with various hobbies: I participate in sports daily, and I take care of my flowers, some of which have grown from a leaf to 2-3 meters in length. I also have a dog and he is my best friend. I try to go on with my life but I cannot imagine the punishment the police deserve for the miseries they committed to me and my brother.

Ludmila Popovici: *While I met one of the brothers a few times, the other one I met only in the penitentiary when I went on a monitoring visit. I did not know he was there but he heard my voice and recognized me since he had seen me on TV. He happily greeted me when I visited their cell. A dark, poorly ventilated cell that was too small for three adults-but it was clean and each item had its specific place. I felt horrified by the thought of an innocent man being held there for years and trying to prove his innocence. But he is not seen or heard. The story he wrote is short. It is as long as he could write it from the penitentiary, but it's very painful.*

Adrian: On August 11th, 2007, when I was arrested and tortured by my former colleagues, my life took a sudden turn which lead to suicidal thoughts. I previously worked in the police force but I was falsely accused of committing a very serious crime that I had nothing to do with. All so-called evidences` were fabricated against me. I could not resist all the suffering I was going through and I could see no other opportunities for getting rid of this nightmare, other than death.

Every morning they would take me from my cell for interrogations using torture. It was also difficult not knowing what was going on with my brother. He had been wildly beaten, with cruelty that is hard to imagine. His screams echo in my ears even now. It was also difficult

to be unable to see my parents, and to be unaware of their thoughts on what was happening. At the moment I was helpless, but sometimes I was aware that if my life continued like that, it would have no meaning and I would have no future. I thought that I would rather kill myself than let the others abuse me in such miserable ways.

But at some point something cheered me a bit. I had the feeling that an angel told me not to commit suicide since it would make my parents suffer. The thought that they would suffer scared me, in addition to the fact that I would have never had the chance to prove my innocence to those that accused me. Also, those that were torturing me would have had another reason to declare me guilty, and connect my suicide with the uncomfortable feeling of “guilt” and arrest. At that point I said that no matter how hard it would be I must stay strong and overcome this situation and lawlessness which was directed against me and my brother.

Most of all I would like to thank my mother, who is a very strong person and the inspiration for my confidence and energy. She is always telling me to stay strong and encourages me with phrases such as, “We are with you and we are going to fight all the evil that has come against us, and we will overcome it, as long as it takes”.

It is difficult for me to still be detained, but I hope that the truth will prevail and I will be free again!

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Rehabilitation Center for Torture Victims „Memoria”

E-mail: rctv@memoria.md

Tel.: (+373 22) 273 222; 270 619

BC Victoriabank SA, Branch №3, Chisinau

141, 31 August 1989 Street, MD-2004

Bank code VICBMD2X416

Fiscal code 1010620006734

Bank account numbers:

MDL 225100000104389

USD MD20VI000222400100104389

EUR MD80VI000222411700104389

Thank you!

RCTV Memoria`s Team

Besides the need for understanding and support in overcoming difficulties, they also have a great need to be heard and seen; especially for the simple reason that they not perceive themselves like victims, but as survivors who want to continue their lives with dignity.

We dedicate this book to our beneficiaries, their families, friends, relatives and all of those who have been with them whenever necessary.

We sincerely thank all of those who were involved in the publication of the book, as well as those who will read it, and wish to invite them to join and to support the team and beneficiaries of RCTV Memoria.

***Ludmila Popovici,
Executive Director,
RCTV Memoria***

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