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Romania: Round table "Advocacy for Dignity"

"Disabled people are citizens as all others, with the same rights and obligations. However, the barriers that still exist in society and the insufficient support provided to disabled people hinder their full and equal enjoyment of human rights. That is why: disability must be seen as a human rights issue."

Disability Non-governmental organizations' Declaration, Strasbourg, January 2003

Amnesty International and Center for Legal Resources (CLR), a Romanian human rights organization, are organizing a round table discussion regarding the lack of protection of basic human rights of people with mental disabilities who are placed in psychiatric institutions in Romania.

Representatives of non-governmental and inter-governmental delegations, state officials and health experts, as well as people with mental disabilities and their families, will discuss a broad range of human rights concerns. Issues discussed will include the need for mental health service reform and the role of civil society, including the people concerned and their families, in the reform process.

What: Round Table "Advocacy for Dignity"

Where: Florentina Hall, International Hotel,
Bucharest

When: 5 November 2004,
0930 - 1700 local time (0730 - 1500 GMT)

Who: Ivan Fiser, Amnesty International, International Secretariat, Central Europe Researcher, "Protecting the basic rights of people placed in psychiatric establishments - an imperative for the Romanian state";

Sean Love, Amnesty International, Irish Section, Executive Director, "Advocating for a reform in Ireland";

Renate Weber, Center for Legal Resources, Executive President;

Georgiana Pascu, Center for Legal Resources, Programme Director, "Independent monitoring of psychiatric hospitals as a human rights safeguard";

Anne de Ligne, Delegation of the European Commission in Romania, Head of the "Phare" Section;

Elizabeth Bouer, Mental Disability Rights International, "Reform-related experiences in Russia, Turkey and Kosovo";

Prof. Graham Thornicroft, King's College London, Institute of Psychiatry, "Development of community-based services".

The round table is aimed at facilitating a broader consensus on the need to fully respect and protect the rights of people with mental disabilities. A significant step in the realization of this need is an appropriate

reform of mental health care services.

For more information and to arrange interviews. please contact:

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Background

Amnesty International is concerned that the placement, living conditions and treatment of patients and residents in many psychiatric wards and hospitals in Romania are in violation of international human rights standards and best professional practice in this field. In one of the hospitals in Poiana Mare, 18 patients died in January and February 2004, reportedly mostly as a result of malnutrition and hypothermia. A thorough and appropriate reform of the mental health care services is the most effective way to remedy the broad range of human rights violations suffered by people placed in psychiatric wards and hospitals, as well as to ensure that the rights of people with mental disorders or intellectual disabilities are fully respected.

Although on 19 May, the Romanian government adopted a list of measures to improve the mental health care system, some of which had also been recommended by Amnesty International, few of these have been implemented. Similarly an investigation into the death of patients in Poiana Mare has not been completed.

See also: *Romania: Patients at the Poiana Mare psychiatric hospital*, AI Index: EUR 39/002/2004, <http://web.amnesty.org/library/index/engeur390022004>

Romania: Memorandum to the government concerning inpatient psychiatric treatment, AI Index: EUR 39/003/2004, <http://web.amnesty.org/library/index/engeur390032004>.

Public Document

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