

# A Social Analysis of the persecutions of Yoga Teachers in Romania

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18th March 2004 the antiterrorist department for fighting organized crime and terrorism (DIICOT) received a politically motivated assignment to make a strike on the yoga movement MISA. The direct cause is believed to be the promise from a candidate that MISA would be finished, if he received a prominent position in the elections as prime minister or president.

Media has created a very bad public image of the MISA movement and this was used to reach political goals. By this an uncontrolled process started to escalate. The private life of the yoga teachers became very hard following the campaign in 2004. Gregorian Bivolaru, who founded MISA in 1990, has for many years been a controversial person in Romania. He managed to escape and received political asylum in Sweden.

The MISA affair was for the first time raised in an international forum at the OSCE meeting in Bucharest 8th June, 2007. This led the head of investigation Marian Delcea to deliver the result of three years investigations, 90 folders, to the city court of Bucharest. Only seven weeks later, during vacations, 21 yoga teachers were requested to meet in court. The case was accelerated beyond the in practice possible. All persons could not be found. The accused had no chance to investigate the material, to find lawyers etc.

**The newspaper Jurnalul National published on its website an act of 790 pages accusing 43 yoga teachers.**

Two specialists; Vicar Karl Erik Nylund for the Supreme Court of Sweden and professor Gabriel Andreescu for a scientific Romanian magazine, have both exhaustively analyzed the situation and the accusations. It is beyond doubt that the activities of MISA are juridical and morally irreprehensible. Andreescu concludes that Marian Delcea is not conducting true investigations but misuse his position to publicly turn yoga teachers into "devils". I continue the analysis from a social perspective based on two visits in Romania 5th - 6th of June and 29th July - 8th August, 2007.

I have investigated the activities of MISA in Bucharest and have taken part in the yoga conference in the summer resort Costinesti. I was present at the trial in Bucharest 6th August 2007 and met six of the accused and Marian Delcea as well. The interviews with these were conducted in private and confidential manner without recordings and with only a translator present.

I have especially investigated the interplay between Marian Delcea and media. This is

easily done as Romanian media in this case act in unison to the finest details. Foreign media has neglected to report the events, maybe in consideration of Romania being a new member of the European Union. Vibeke Sperling for Politiken is a noticeable exception. She has a reputation as being an expert on violations of Human Rights.

Since 1996, MISA have endured ongoing media campaigns and since 1996. From March 2004 the violations of the Human Rights of the members reached a new level of bluntness.

During 2004 - 2006 the judicial structure of the country was reformed due to the admission in the European Union. Now the opposite take place; the Romanian justice is violating the Human Rights so bluntly that all members of the European Union are obliged to grant political asylum to all the yoga teachers that are the victims of the persecutions of Marian Delcea and Romanian media.

### Ashram - a social invention like Micro-loans

MISA provides yoga classes for tens of thousands of yoga practitioners in Romania and a dozen other countries. Marian Delcea attacks a minor part of the activities of MISA called "Ashrams". All 16 houses containing Ashrams were searched in 2004 by 300 policemen. The material that Delcea delivered to court in 2007 was gathered during this strike, except for the evidence by interrogations.

Ashrams are old fashioned youth housings. Two or three persons share a room. There are common bathrooms and dining rooms. The yoga hall of the Ashram is at the disposal of the MISA for yoga classes. Lodging and food is paid for by working for the common good of the house; first it is renovated and then you daily clean, cook and keep 24-hours guard to keep aggressive reporters away.

Lodging and food on the common market in Romanian is as expensive as in Sweden even if the salaries are about 10-30% of the Swedish. The prices of houses have escalated so that it is very hard to buy something new for your own, if you do not have a house to trade with. MISA has acquired houses when the prices were low and renovated and built by their own labour and can thereby provide a secure life basis. This coincides with the MISA principle that the individual yoga practice should be in connection with commune work. Marian Delcea on the other hand raises an alarm of "return of the communism".

The Ashrams of MISA could be seen as-should be considered as "Micro-loans" The Ashrams are a solution to a common situation in the post Soviet countries. Through "Micro-loans" individuals are helped to get started with production. You can live in an Ashram without money and receive a secure life basis for your further advancement in life. Those living in the Ashrams are also working or studying.

I stayed four days in one of the three houses of MISA by the Black Sea. To stay one

month at the resort would normally cost 500€ per month. With MISA you pay 10€ for the whole stay including vegetarian meals, a safe place to stay and a full time yoga program. In return you work 8 hours a day, rebuilding, cleaning, cooking etc..

There are rules; for example the food is not allowed in the bedrooms to avoid vermin. The shoes are left outside and the mornings are silent as many prefer to practice yoga and meditation in these hours. The beds and bookshelves are not to be moved. Men and women stay separated on different floors, but there is no prohibition to visit each other. In the bathrooms specific shoes are to be used and only in the bedroom are you allowed to walk bare foot. There are no radios or TVs. Every night films are shown. The dining hall is opened two hours for lunch and two hours for dinner. Outside these hours you can eat your own food in the dining hall, but not in the bedrooms. There are refrigerators in the corridors.

I conclude that from a certain point of view it is not even a question of voluntary work but more as a payment of lodging and food - the yoga classes are given on top.

Marian Delcea has misused his position to make former inhabitants of the Ashrams to testify against MISA. Still he has only succeeded to convince two families of a total of seven individuals to do this. The vast majority is perfectly happy. The people in the MISA movement are open individuals with a strong self-esteem.

## Media and the head of investigations

Talking to Delcea gives an impression of an insecure man who is unaware of the damage he is causing to innocent humans. He immediately told my translator that she belongs to MISA and that he is familiar with intimate details about her life. He said he was critical to the few testimonies he had received and that he bases this personal conviction on ideas like. "How can girls choose to go to Japan for work?" or "No-one can by his free will choose to live in an Ashram where the conditions are so pore!". He is not trying to find evidence. When I pressure him regarding him giving confidential material to media he starts to explain how good he is at riding his motorcycle, and that he has a flying certificate, and crashed twice.

### **By medical terms Marian Delcea is to be considered a psychopath.**

Marian Delcea began his actions immediately after international attention was put on the affair. 14th June 2007 the groundless accusations were leaked to media. Jurnalul National followed through and published the whole on its website. Then the process halted. The material was not further used by TV or written media. Media was not present at the trial and the opportunity to show the faces of the accused was not taken. The few journalists present had only me to interview.

In court two flags hang behind the judge; the Romanian flag and the flag of the European Union. What took place in the court was though solely a Romanian

variation of justice. The accused were lined up in front of the judge and a dialogue regarding the summoning of Bivolaru, which was without relevance as he is protected by asylum in Sweden. It was decided to postpone the trial for six weeks. The lawyers pointed out that the accusations were defined as trafficking of minors, even if no minors are mentioned in the actual case. The judge immediately changed the definition. We left court confused.

I was interviewed by Realitatea-TV. I pointed out that the trial could be harmful for Romania as the financial support of the European Union can be cancelled. Nothing of the interview was broadcasted. Media choose not to spread the false accusations of Marian Delcea, but the critical voices raised against the trial were not given any room in media.

The reporters of two local news agents put many questions and delivered to their customer. This leads to media reporting on my presence at court, but nothing regarding my views on the case. I was criticized for mistaking in naming the source where I found Marian Delcea's document of accusations.

I went to see Marian Delcea primarily to investigate if it really was his official documents that were published on the website of the Jurnalul National. The documents were at his desk and I showed him an electronic version of the document published at the website. He did not let me see the documents at his desk. Thus Marian Delcea did not allow me to view the official documents that were leaked to media two months earlier.

The public has no insight in the process. We could suppose that Marian Delcea had wanted media to work up public opinion from the start of the trial. Something came in between. Romanian media is quite today's. Now the trial is moved six weeks and media is given more time to spread the false accusations.

**As professor Andreescu pointed out the conditions of a fair trial are thereby already eliminated.**