

# Transdnestr Jails Moldovan Man on Espionage Charge

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CHISINAU — A court in Moldova's breakaway Transdnestr region has sentenced a Moldovan man to 14 years in jail after convicting him of espionage.

State security officials in the separatist region detained Ilie Cazac, 25, a tax inspector from the town of Bender, last March.

A court in Transdnestr's main town, Tiraspol, jailed him on Wednesday after finding him guilty of state treason and espionage on behalf of Moldova.

"They turned up 20 false witnesses who confirmed that my son was guilty of state treason. It is nonsense — as if in Moldova there could be a leak of information about Moldova," said Cazac's father, Alexander Vinitchii.

He said his son was the victim of "political games."

It is the second such case in the pro-Russian separatist region, which broke from Moldova

in 1990 and fought a brief war with Moldovan forces two years later.

Ernest Vardanean, an independent journalist born in Armenia, was jailed last December for 15 years in Transdnestr on similar charges.

Both trials took place in closed hearings, and Transdnestr authorities gave no details of the cases beyond saying both men had been recruited by Moldovan state security.

The government in Chisinau condemned the jailing of Cazac as "unlawful and unfounded" and said it ran counter to efforts to build confidence between Moldova and the separatist region.

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