



THE GUTUL CASE

ANATOMY OF POLITICAL PERSECUTION

*Dedicated to my father
(1954–2024)*

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FOREWORD

My name is Evghenia Gutul.

I am currently in Prison No. 13 in Chisinau.

They put me in jail for seven years on a fabricated case because I defended my people. I became too dangerous in my country for those who fear the truth.

Seven years means my eldest son, Daniil, will finish school without me, and my youngest son, Mark, will start first grade without me. I will miss birthdays, graduations, first loves, and I will count the years not by calendars, but by letters and rare visits through glass.

I was born in Etulia, a village in the south of Moldova, in the autonomous region of Gagauzia. People speak their own language there and don't forget their identity. I went to a regular rural school, then enrolled in the Law Faculty at the State University of Moldova.

I had a naive dream — to defend those who cannot put up any defence and to be the voice of those who are not heard.

I went from a rank-and-file employee to the Governor (Baskan) of Gagauzia. Wherever I worked, I always defended people's rights. They put me in prison for speaking the truth. For defending the rights of my people and for not bowing down when they expected me to.

My relatives decided to collect this book from the letters I wrote from prison. At first, I refused: "Who needs this?" But then I realised: if my voice can reach even one person, then it would be worth it.

I don't know where this book will find you. Maybe you are reading it in a free country, where no one is imprisoned for political views, or maybe you are in prison yourself and you can relate to it. Or you simply stumbled upon this book in a store and decided to read a couple of pages out of curiosity.

It doesn't matter. I am glad you are here.

This book is neither a confession nor a memoir. It is simply proof that they did not break me. And if you hold it in your hands, I have already won.



What this book is about

This is a compilation of thirty letters that I wrote to different people: my husband, my children, my mother, politicians, journalists, and myself. Some were sent, some remained on paper.

In these letters, you will find many things.

Politics — yes, of course, because politics is what brought me here. You will learn about the developments in Moldova and Gagauzia, how the autonomy is being choked, how undesirable TV channels are shut down, and how people are imprisoned without evidence. You will learn about the ruling PAS party — its colour is yellow — and how it silences the unwanted. You will learn about the referendum where 94.84% of Gagauz people voted against European integration, and what happened to us afterwards.

Gagauzia. It is a small autonomy that not everyone outside of Moldova knows about yet.

You will learn about our people, our language, and our traditions, about efforts to preserve our identity, despite everything, about the vineyards and fields, Gagauz cuisine and hospitality, and why this land is worth fighting for.

Economics and history. You will learn what Moldova was like before, when hundreds of factories operated and no one left the homeland in search of a better life. You will learn how the country was destroyed, why 40% of the population fled over the last 30 years, and what happens when the economy dies and people become statistics.

Family. Politics cannot be separated from life. You will learn about my children: my elder son Daniil, who became an adult too soon, and my younger son Mark, who was just three years old and barely starting to speak when I was locked up. You will learn about my husband, Artyom, who stayed behind alone with our two boys and holds on every day, even though he probably wants to give up and collapse from exhaustion.

My mother. She bakes the best pies in the world. How I dream of sitting in her kitchen again. You will learn about my father, who is no longer with us, but who taught me never to bend before injustice.

Faith — not just religious faith, though we will talk about that too. You will learn about faith in people, in justice, and faith that the truth will prevail sooner or later. I will talk about how to keep this faith when many say my struggle is in vain.

Choice. That very choice that changes a life. To go into politics or stay on the sidelines? To speak the truth or remain silent for the safety of my family? To fight or to give up? Everyone has such a moment in life when they must choose who they will be. This book is about my choice.

Freedom. Not abstract, but very concrete. You will learn what it is like to lose it and dream of getting it back, that freedom is not just the absence of bars, but the right to live by one's conscience.

You will learn what it's like: to sit in a cell and think about how your three-year-old son is growing up without a mother. How to write a letter to the politician who put you here. How to appeal to journalists to tell the truth when no one benefits from hearing it. And you will also learn what it's like to love, to hope, and to believe even when every signal implies there is no hope.

Why I am writing this

I am not writing this to evoke pity or to make you think I am a heroine. I am an ordinary woman who made a choice and paid a high price for it.

I am writing because I cannot remain silent, because silence makes you an accomplice. Even from here, behind bars, I disagree with what is happening.

I am writing for those who think that one person cannot

change anything. Yes, maybe it doesn't always work out, you don't always win, but you can try, and that is already important.

I am writing for those who are afraid to speak the truth because it is dangerous. Yes, it is dangerous, but remaining silent is even more dangerous — for your soul, your conscience, and the future of your children.

I am writing for my children, so that when they grow up, they will read this and understand: Mom didn't abandon them. Mom was taken away, but she fought to the end.

Who this book is for

For politicians who think that power is the right to do whatever they want. No, power is responsibility towards every person, even if they voted against you.

For journalists who have forgotten that their job is to seek the truth, not to re-tell press releases. Return to your profession because the world needs real journalists more than ever.

For mothers who are torn between family and work. Yes, it's hard, and yes, sometimes you have to choose. There is no right answer, only your choice, and you have the right to make it.

For those who are in prison for their beliefs. You are not alone, hold on. They can lock up your body, but not your soul.

For those interested in small nations and their struggle to preserve their identity. Gagauzia is not exotic textbook material; it is living people with their own history, problems, and hopes.

For those who want to understand what is really happening in post-Soviet countries that call themselves democracies (it is not always what is shown on the news).

For those who have never faced injustice and think they will never face it. Maybe not, but maybe they will — tomorrow, a year later, ten years later. It is better to know how it works.

What I want to say

Life is unpredictable. Not long ago, I was the Governor of Gagauzia, making plans, dreaming about the future. Today, I sit in a prison cell which the European Court of Human Rights has recognized as a place with inhumane conditions, and I am writing letters.

Yes, it is hard for me. Yes, I miss my children so much that sometimes I can't breathe. And yes, sometimes I want to give up. But I did what I thought was right. I defended my people and did not betray my principles. And if I had to choose again, I would choose the same.

This is not heroism — it is simply living by one's conscience. And I hope that when you close this book, you too will think: what would I have done in her place?

Read, think, and draw your own conclusions. Don't agree with me — that is normal and even the right thing. The bottom line: do not be indifferent, because indifference kills the world faster than any dictatorship.

Before you read: what is Gagauzia?

Perhaps you are holding this book and thinking: I have never heard of Gagauzia; I live in another country, I have my own life, why should I read this?

Let me explain.

Most people on the planet have never heard of Gagauzia. It is a small autonomy in the south of Moldova, home to about 155,000 people.

Its inhabitants are the Gagauz: a Turkic-speaking Orthodox Christian people who have preserved their language and identity despite everything that has happened around them over the last century.

Gagauzia has existed as an autonomous region since 1994, after an armed conflict was narrowly averted in the early 1990s. A compromise was reached: Moldova recognized the autonomy, and the autonomy remained part of Moldova.

Gagauzia has its own parliament — the People's Assembly — and an elected head, the Governor (Baskan). By law, the Governor is automatically a member of the Moldovan government to ensure the region's voice is heard at the national level.

In May 2023, I was elected Governor, gaining 52.34% of the vote. President Maia Sandu refused to include me in the government, contrary to the direct legal provision.

A year later, in the 2024 referendum, 94.84% of Gagauz residents voted against European integration — a policy that the ruling PAS party considers its main achievement and goal.

The region did not break any law. It simply voted differently.

It was after this that I was arrested.

But the issue is not just about Gagauzia.

It is about the question this story poses to any democracy: what happens to a minority that votes "the wrong way"? Do they receive protection from the institutions, or do the institutions become instruments of pressure? Can you persecute leaders because they represent their people? Cut regional budgets, close TV channels, deprive children of the right to learn their native language, and still call this democracy?

These questions arise wherever there is a minority with its own voice and a power that finds that voice inconvenient. Sooner or later, a moment comes when it ends in prison. In Gagauzia, it came in 2023. And it has a name, an address, and seven years behind bars.

Wherever you are reading this book, this question concerns

you. But if you are in Europe, it concerns you even more: Europe is currently incorporating Moldova into its ranks, and this decision is being made in your name. While negotiations for accession are ongoing, a democratically elected politician sits in Prison No. 13 in Chisinau because her people voted differently.

*With respect and hope,
Evghenia Gutul
Prison No. 13, Chisinau
April 5, 2026*



ANATOMY OF POLITICAL PERSECUTION

Further on, you will read my letters from prison. They were written to different people, at different times, with different moods. But before that, I want to show you the complete picture, detailing the violations I faced.

I asked my lawyers to compile everything into a single document, including the dates, rulings, articles of the Constitution of Moldova, the Criminal and Criminal Procedure Codes, and the European Convention on Human Rights – everything that can be proven.

It turned out to be 40 pages. I won't overload you; there is still a whole book ahead. But I will show you the harshest bits so you can realize these were not individual mistakes, but a system of pressure that was built step by step.

For me, these aren't some abstract legal formulas. They are concrete consequences that affected my family, my children, and my life.

Two Criminal Cases

Before moving on to specific violations, let me tell you how I ended up in prison. My deprivation of liberty was not random. It was a sequenced and orchestrated move.

Two criminal cases were opened against me.

Case No. 1 — the main criminal case regarding the alleged illegal financing of the Shor Party between 2019 and 2022.

It was opened on January 21, 2022, under Art. 181/2 para. (1) of the Criminal Code of the Republic of Moldova ("violation of the procedure for managing the funds of political parties"). Later, Art. 243 para. (3) b of the Criminal Code ("money laundering") and Art. 181/2 para. (5) of the Criminal Code ("knowingly accepting financing from an organised criminal group") were added to the case.

I was charged under Art. 42 para. (5) CC in connection with Art. 181/2 part (5) CC.

This is the case that landed me a sentence of seven years of imprisonment. The appeal is currently underway.

Case No. 2 — a separate criminal case regarding the alleged illegal financing of my electoral campaign for the Governor of Gagauzia in 2023. This case was opened in January 2024, but I was not notified. I only learned of its existence on 25 March 2025, at the time of my detention at Chisinau Airport.

After my arrest, no active procedural actions were actually taken in this case.

I believe this is a tool of pressure: the second case was used not for investigation, but as an instrument to deprive me of liberty at the right moment.

When the main case approached its end, they took the second case off the shelf to deprive me of freedom at the most

convenient moment – at the airport, under the formal pretext of “risk of flight” despite the fact that I had lived openly for years, was the Governor, had a family and children, and had no travel restrictions.

Most importantly, everything set out below is not a collection of isolated episodes, but elements of a single system. You can read about the timeline of these cases in the letter ‘To My Lawyers’.

PART 1.

Violations during the election campaign and mandate confirmation

In May 2023, I won the election for Governor of Gagauzia, receiving 52.36% of the vote. Immediately after this, media outlets controlled by the authorities began writing about "bribing voters" and "election fraud."

They had no evidence. These articles began appearing everywhere and were disseminated before any court rulings.

This violates the presumption of innocence and the right to free elections, guaranteed by Protocol No. 1 to the European Convention on Human Rights (Article 3).

After the vote count, employees of the National Anti-Corruption Centre seized documents from the Central Electoral Commission of Gagauzia, and then documents from the Comrat Court, to which they had already been transferred for the approval of results.

The official basis was as follows: the lists of voters allegedly contained deceased voters and votes were counted from citizens abroad.

These accusations were subsequently not confirmed.

Despite the pressure, the Comrat Court of Appeal approved

my mandate. I became the legally elected Governor. However, the President of the Republic of Moldova did not include me in the Government: she publicly refused to sign the decree, although under the Law on the Special Legal Status of Gagauzia (Article 14), the Governor is ex-officio a member of the government.

In the defence files, these actions are considered a discriminatory approach and an abuse of permitted limitations of rights, citing Articles 14 and 18 of the European Convention.

PART 2.

Pressure on the Gagauz Autonomy

After the mandate was approved, pressure from the authorities was directed not only against me personally but also against the autonomy itself.

They restricted Gagauzia’s powers: The Comrat Court of Appeal was abolished, the autonomy was deprived of the right to participate in appointing the prosecutor, and the Governor was not added to the Supreme Security Council.

Violation: Constitution of RM, Articles 6, 7, 10, 20, 111; Law on the Status of Gagauzia, Articles 20, 21.

Financial pressure: the autonomy’s budget was cut, funds for the Road Fund were reduced, and support programmes for vulnerable segments of the population were restricted or terminated.

Violation: Constitution of RM, Articles 6, 7, 10, 20, 111

Blow to education: teachers of the Gagauz language were removed from the staff of kindergartens. More than 70 teachers lost their jobs, and more than 5,000 children lost the opportunity to learn their native language.

All these decisions affected not one person, but an entire region, making their political choice the basis for restrictions.

PART 3.

Violations in criminal proceedings and appeal

1. Non-existent organised criminal group as the foundation of the accusation

The key pillar of the prosecution is based on the tentative allegation of "knowingly accepting financing from an organised criminal group" (Art. 181/2 para. (5) of the Criminal Code). The case lacks a structure of the group, its members have not been identified, roles have not been defined, and the source of illegal income has not been proven.

If the existence of an organised crime group is not proven, the prosecution is deprived of its legal basis and remains at the level of mere assumption.

This violates the fundamental principles of the rule of law, the right to a fair trial, the presumption of innocence, and other principles guaranteed by Article 6 of the European Convention.

2. The charges are not specific enough

The case for the defence emphasizes that the criminal case consists of 69 volumes, while the main part of the data does not relate to my specific actions but forms a general background. Evidence directly related to me is contained in five volumes only.

Violation: The principle of relevance of evidence; Criminal Procedure Code of the Republic of Moldova, Articles 93 and 94; The principle of individualization of charges and the right to a fair trial.

3. All defence evidence rejected

In the appeal, the defence submitted an extensive list of evidence of innocence: motions to examine witnesses, to conduct expert examinations, to re-examine the case materials, and to verify the constitutionality of the applicable legal provisions. All motions were rejected — not after their analysis and assessment, but effectively without any justification. The defence insisted on examining more than 170 witnesses who could confirm my innocence. The court refused, and the judicial inquiry was concluded.

Paradox: In the appeal, the prosecution's witnesses themselves did not confirm key elements of the charges. They stated that they had not seen my actions and could not confirm that I had received money. Yet even this did not lead the court to reconsider its position.

Violation: European Convention, Articles 6.1 and 6.3(d); Criminal Procedure Code of the Republic of Moldova, Articles 93 and 94; the principle of adversarial proceedings and equality of arms, and the principle of a fair trial.

4. Lack of motivation for court decisions

The court rejected all defence evidence but did not explain why. The court refused to question the witnesses without stating any reasons. The court decided that I must remain in prison, despite there being no risk of flight and despite my having two young children, which violates Article 5 of the European Convention on Human Rights.

A reasoned decision is a safeguard against arbitrariness. When a decision lacks reasoning, it ceases to be an act of justice and becomes an act of mere authority.

Violation: Article 6.1 of the European Convention on Human Rights (right to a fair trial); the obligation of the court to provide reasons for its decisions.

5. Actual exclusion from my own trial

I was deprived of the opportunity to be present in the courtroom and personally participate in the process that shaped my fate. The appeal took place remotely: I was in Penitentiary No. 13, the connection was via video conferencing.

In fact, I could hardly hear what was being said in court because the microphone was malfunctioning or not working at all. I could not follow the course of the hearing, and I did not understand which issues were being discussed. I had no opportunity to communicate confidentially with my lawyers.

Violation: European Convention, Articles 6.1 and 6.3(c) (the right to defend oneself in person and to communicate with legal counsel); International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, Article 14.

6. Illegal and arbitrary arrest of a mother of two

The lawyers petitioned for release on bail or house arrest. I have two children, the youngest is three years old. I am a public figure; I cannot go into hiding.

The prosecutor stated that having young children is a risk factor — that if she wants to see them, she will try to flee.

As a result, motherhood and care for children were interpreted not as a factor of social stability, but as an argument in favour of detention.

Taken together, this meets the criteria for arbitrary

detention under Article 5 of the European Convention and Article 9 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, as well as Categories III and V of the UN Working Group on Arbitrary Detention.

7. Arbitrary prosecution and "convenient" witnesses

There were dozens of rank-and-file employees in our department with the same functions. But only two ended up on trial — myself and Svetlana Popan — because we refused to cooperate with the authorities.

The other participants who were charged under the same articles were threatened with prison terms, pressured into full cooperation, and in some cases forced to give testimony favourable to the authorities. And they did so.

They were transferred from being defendants to prosecution witnesses against us.

This is a direct violation of Articles 93 and 94 of the Criminal Procedure Code of the Republic of Moldova: a former defendant cannot be turned into a witness without legal grounds, and their testimony cannot be used as reliable evidence. Nevertheless, the court accepted it exactly as such. This also contradicts Article 6 of the European Convention on the right to a fair trial.

The picture is simple: from a large team, two "undesirable" defendants were selected, and the rest were moulded into witnesses.

Illegal wiretapping: 69 phones

The case included the results of wiretapping 69 mobile phones. The analysis was carried out without authorization from an investigating judge. The court accepted them as evidence without verifying their legality.

This violates Articles 132/8 of the Criminal Procedure Code (judicial authorization required), Article 14 of the Criminal Procedure Code (secrecy of correspondence), and Article 8 of the European Convention.

Simultaneously with the court proceedings, there was an information campaign of harassment.

In October 2025, the pro-government TV channel TVR Moldova spread falsehoods about my testimony, attributing to me words I never spoke — claiming that I stated my task was to keep records of the funds of the former Shor Party.

My lawyers, on my behalf, filed a lawsuit against the channel for defamation and violation of dignity, but the court refused to hear it due to non-payment of the state fee, because my accounts have been frozen on the authorities' orders — I cannot transfer even a single leu.

The lawyers paid the fee of 240 lei (12 euros) through a payment terminal and attached the receipt to the lawsuit. But within a week, the State Tax Service issued a decision to block that payment. As a result, the court returned the lawsuit without consideration.

Thus, the constitutional article on free access to justice has become for me nothing more than a mere collection of alphabet letters.

International lawyers weighed in

On the eve of the appeal hearing, I was visited in Prison No. 13 by two international lawyers — William Julié from France and Gonzalo Boye from Spain. They came to meet with me and get ready for the proceedings.

After the visit, William Julié gave a public comment about what he saw: "This is a farce. I have never seen anything like this

anywhere in the world. This is my first such case."

He explained what was happening in the courtroom: "Evghenia cannot hear what is happening in court. The microphone doesn't work. She doesn't understand what is happening. And yet, the court continues the process."

According to him, the right to defence under such conditions becomes a mere formality: "We will turn to international institutions, including the European Court of Human Rights, to discuss what is happening here."



The second lawyer, Gonzalo Boye, commented on the very fact of where exactly he has to prepare the defence: "In an ordinary case, we would be preparing the defence with Evghenia while she is free, not in prison."

He was referring to standard practice: before a sentence is handed down, a person is typically at home, and lawyers meet with them at the office. In my case, the lawyers are forced to come to the pre-trial detention centre, where there is no confidentiality, meeting times are limited, and it is impossible to work properly with the case materials. In fact, this amounts to a violation of fundamental guarantees of a fair trial, above all the right to effective legal assistance, confidential communication with lawyers, and the opportunity to fully prepare for the judicial process.

CONCLUSION

I believe that in my case the law was used not as a tool for protecting rights, but as a means of pressure against an undesirable politician. In the following letters, I will tell you what it feels like from the inside and what a person feels when they are deprived of freedom, separated from their children, and stripped of their normal life.

For now, there are just facts and figures, so you can answer the question yourselves: *is this justice or revenge?*

Letter to my Dad

Hello, Papa!

I remember our last conversation. You called me and said: "Daughter, hello! I've collected some eggs for you, when will you drop by?" Your voice was, as always, dear and warm. I couldn't have imagined then that I would never hear you again. It was so natural for me: Papa would always be there.

That day, I answered quickly. Unfortunately, very quickly: "Papa, I'm busy right now. I'll call you back later." I was on my way to the airport, my phone was ringing off the hook, there were a ton of unread messages in chats, questions were pouring in from all sides.

...You will never call me again.

My God, how could I have known that this was our last conversation and you would never say to me again: "Daughter, hello!"

You were like a Viking: almost two metres tall, with grey-green eyes. My Papa, you were afraid of nothing. I thought you were immortal.

A year and a half has passed since that day, but I feel like I've lived three lives. During this time, what you predicted happened, but I refused to believe it. When you found out I would be participating in the election campaign for the position of Governor of Gagauzia, you were happy but immediately started to worry.

I remember how you took my hand and said: "Daughter, politics is a dirty business; they might devour you."

And I didn't listen. I thought: if it's for the people, what should I be afraid of?

Then you saw me become Governor. The most touching thing at my inauguration was you crying and wiping your tears with a handkerchief. The cameras caught this moment in close-up: you were crying with pride for your daughter. You — a man who never showed emotions.



You turned out to be right: a year later, I was arrested and thrown in prison. It is good that you did not see how your Daughter was put behind bars in front of my mother and children, with whom I barely had time to say goodbye. I don't even know how you would have survived it.

I am now sitting within these four walls and thinking about you every day. I remember how you would find any excuse to hear my voice. The eggs, chicken, fresh grapes — all of this was your way of saying: "Daughter, I miss you."

And I was always busy, answering on the run: "I'll call you back, Papa, no time, things are urgent."

I lived with the certainty that you would always be there. I believed that I would have time later to stop by for the eggs, to have a heart-to-heart, to spend a whole day with you.

Later.

It seemed there was still a whole load of time left. And this "later" — it will definitely come... It simply cannot be otherwise. And suddenly it turned out that "later" had ended. It ended the moment I hung up after your last call.

This feeling of guilt tears me apart every day.

I will remember that day in March forever. I was flying to Sochi to defend Gagauzia and uphold our rights.

And then I was told that you had been rushed to intensive care, your heart was failing. Doctors were fighting for your life. Everything inside me fell apart. God, how I prayed then! I believed: you are my Papa, you will cope, you are strong. It just can't be any other way!

They wrote to me that you had regained consciousness: "He is in a critical condition, but there is hope."

The next day, I had a meeting with Vladimir Putin; I knew

Chisinau would not forgive this. But I did not regret my decision for a second, because I had come to defend my people.

I flew home on March 8th. We found out that the regime was preparing to arrest me right at the airport. I didn't care; I only wanted one thing — to get to you in the hospital as quickly as possible. Hundreds of people who came to support me were waiting at the airport.

I drove so fast, my heart pounded so hard, and fear gripped me so strong that the road from the airport felt like an eternity. How happy I was when I arrived: you were conscious! Seeing me, you exclaimed: "Daughter!" — and again took my hand in yours. I still remember that touch, and now that word rings in my head every day.

I showed you photos from the trip... You were incredibly proud of me.

We really believed you would recover... The nurses said that you even joked with them, congratulated them on March 8th, and asked me to bring the most delicious kvass for the next day.

I remember that day down to the smallest detail. You were lying on the bed, holding my hand; then you looked out the window and said: "Such a beautiful sky."

I left calmly and thought that since you had woken up, everything would be fine. In the evening, I needed to congratulate the women of Gagauzia from the stage. And I went out to them with a smile, although my soul was in the hospital with you. Some media outlets later sneered: "Her father was dying, and she was having fun dancing."

They didn't understand a simple thing: when you are an elected leader, you do not have the right to show your weakness to the people. No matter what pain tears your heart apart, you must be strong for those who believe in you.

On the morning of March 9th, the head doctor called me: "Evghenia, come. Your father won't survive; he only has a few hours left." These words hit me like a knife.

We immediately got ready and left — Mom, Artyom, me, and the children. When we arrived, you were in a coma in the intensive care unit behind a glass partition. You were breathing heavily, with a terrible wheeze.

I stood and looked at you, and my whole life flashed before my eyes.

I remembered how you carried me on your shoulders when I was little. God, how happy I was: Papa was carrying me on his shoulders, and I was the happiest girl in the world.

I remembered how you took me everywhere with you, even in your KamAZ truck. And when we stopped, you would sit me on your lap and let me steer the wheel! I felt so important.

I remembered how you took me to your friends. I would always return home with my pockets full of nuts and apples. Mom would laugh and say: "You can always tell where they've been with Papa just by looking at the Daughter's pockets."

I remembered how you always said what a beauty I was and how thick my eyelashes were. I loved your compliments so much that I even asked you to put matches on my eyelashes to show you how thick they were: "Papa, look, even matches don't fall!"

And I also remembered that cassette tape with Nadezhda Kadyshcheva. You loved listening to her, and I loved to sing! You would sit me down on a chair in front of you and say: "Well, come on, my little artist, sing for me." And I would sing my heart out, and you would listen with such pride as if I were a real star.

We spent 38 years together. I realised that with loved ones, no amount of time is enough — not 38 years, not 50, not even 100.

And all of this flashed before my eyes in literally a minute. How fast life passes...

We stood by the glass partition for several hours. A couple of times it seemed like you stopped breathing; I would get scared, scream, and call for the doctors, and then you would start breathing heavily again.

It was as if you just couldn't leave...

There is a belief that when loved ones are nearby, it is hard for the soul to depart... Someone from the medical staff came up to us and said: "He is dying. You are not letting him go. Go home, allow him to leave in peace."

My heart was bleeding... I said goodbye to you and videoed you — I so wanted to preserve these last moments. It all remained on the phone that was taken from me upon my arrest. I begged to be allowed to download at least these videos and photos, but they refused. So we were left without photos of our last moments with you.

Two hours after we left, they called and told me you had died. I couldn't breathe, I couldn't speak. It seemed impossible to survive this pain.

...Only two months remained until your 70th birthday. I still cannot believe you are gone. Every night in this cell, I ask for your forgiveness and talk to you. Only after you left did I understand: as long as our parents are alive, we are still children — protected, loved, we have someone who remembers us as tiny babies, who loves us unconditionally, just because we exist.

Forgive me, Papa. For every unanswered call. For the fact that I was always in a hurry and didn't think that your "Daughter, hello!" would one day be the last.

I cannot imagine what you would feel now, seeing your daughter behind bars — it would break your heart again. But I

believe that you are watching me from that very beautiful sky you talked about for the last time, and you are proud of me, protecting me, and praying for me.

You must know: I will fight to the end, because you taught me never to give up.

If I could say something to people: do not put things off. Call your parents right now. Tell them how much you love them. Pick up those eggs and treats they prepared for you. Every call could be the last. There will be no more time, and you cannot get it back.

I love you so much, Papa. More than you could have known.

Your Daughter

Letter to Mother

Hello, Mommy!

Today I was recalling how I used to come home from school in the 90s. You always said the same thing: "Change your clothes, wash your hands, and sit down to eat." And when I went out, you would say: "Are you dressed warm enough?"

I would roll my eyes back then: "Mo-om, come on!" And now I miss those words so much.

I miss your hands. Do you remember how you used to stroke my hair, and I would fall asleep immediately? I remember your hands down to the smallest detail — every wrinkle, every vein. I remember how you used to sing lullabies to me in Gagauz.

I miss how we used to sit in the kitchen and laugh. You used to tell me that at age seven, I wanted to become a cosmonaut, fly to Mars, and plant flowers there so that "it would be beautiful to look at it from space."

I miss your floral bathrobe. I miss your slippers, shuffling across the floor in the morning. When I heard that sound, I always knew from that sound that you were already in the kitchen and breakfast would be ready soon.

And I also miss your signature chicken wings and gözleme! When I get out, will you make them? In the oven, with that same marinade. Here, when they bring watery porridge with a meat patty, I close my eyes and imagine your wings and hot gözleme. Mmm... my mouth is watering.

And, of course, I miss how you say "Zhenechka." Everyone calls me differently: officially — Evghenia Alexandrovna, in the media — Gutul, friends — Zhenya. But it's your "Zhenechka" that I miss the most.

The most important thing, Mom: don't worry about me.

I am not afraid. My will is not broken, and with each passing day here, I only become stronger.

I know that I did everything right — I gave my word to the people and I am keeping it.

And yes, I have a fine diet, I dress warmly, and I definitely wash my hands before eating :)

You know what I realised here, within these four walls? The hardest thing for a mother is to accept the choices of her children. Especially when you understand that your child has chosen a difficult path.

But you have always believed in me and stood by me, no matter what.

Do you remember when I said I would run for Governor? You were silent for a long time. Then you said: "Zhenechka, it will be hard. They will smear you with mud, they will envy you, they will try to break you. But know this: I am always with you, and I will support you."

From that day on, you haven't missed a single important moment. I remember your eyes and Papa's eyes at my inauguration — they shone with tears and pride. I remember your eyes when elderly people came to thank us for extra pension payouts. When grandmothers wept with joy that they could finally buy medicine and not have to ask their children for money.

I remember your eyes at the opening of GagauziyaLand. Children ran and squealed with delight, and elderly people said: "Finally, civilization has reached us too."

You supported me in every decision, in every step. Even when the threats began, when they started hounding me in the press, when you yourself were afraid for me, you never said: "Stop, it's too dangerous."

And even now, when I am in prison, you don't say "Why did you get into it?" but "The truth will come out sooner or later. Hold on, we'll get you out of there."

This is what real maternal love is — the kind that supports and believes, even when the sky is covered in clouds. The kind that doesn't say "I told you so!" The kind that says "I am with you."

You know, many mothers in such a situation would say: "I told you! You shouldn't have gotten into politics!" But you are not like that, and I am immensely grateful to you for it.

Do you remember the red cat?

I was about nine years old. The neighbor boys tied a tin can to his tail and chased him, laughing. I ran out into the yard, pushed aside the boy who was twice my size, and caught the cat. He scratched up my whole arm until it bled, but I dragged him home. You washed my arm with peroxide — I remember how it stung. You bandaged it with gauze. Then you said: "Zhenechka, you can't save everyone, but at least you saved this cat."

I didn't understand those words then. It seemed to me: if you see injustice — you must intervene. How can you just walk by?

But you were wiser. You already knew that there is too much pain in this world, and if you try to save everyone — you will break. That sometimes you have to choose: who you can save, and who — not.

Only now, in my cell, have I truly understood your words.

I grew up in Gagauzia and knew how people lived here. When I became Governor, I saw the full depth of the problems. Pensioners who receive 2,800 lei (about 140 euros). Out of that:

2,000 lei goes to utilities (gas, electricity, water);

1,500 lei for food (bread, grains, the cheapest meat once a week);

500–700 lei for medicine — that's the bare minimum, and many have diabetes, hypertension, heart problems.

That's 4,200 lei (210 euros) in total, and the pension is only 2,800 lei. So every month, the pensioner is forced to ask their children for money, or not buy medicine, or go hungry.

I saw 70-year-old grandmothers standing in the market in freezing weather, selling their vegetables just to add a little to their pension. I saw people choosing between buying bread or medicine for blood pressure.

How could I see this and remain silent? How could I walk by?

You were right. I cannot save everyone. But I could help those 40 thousand pensioners and public sector employees who we managed to provide with a supplement thanks to Ilan Şor. Those children who now ride in GagauziyaLand. Those sick children whom we helped with treatment.

I didn't save everyone. But I couldn't walk by.

When I gave birth to Dan, I truly understood you for the first time.

I understood what it's like to love so fiercely that you would do anything. You worry about every step and every decision. You wake up at night and listen to hear if they are breathing. You are afraid they will get sick, fall, or make the wrong choice.

I understood that maternal love is not just tenderness, but also fear. It lives inside from the very moment you give birth.

The fear that you are not all-powerful and that you cannot protect your child from the entire world.



But now, in prison, I understand something else: you feared for me, for our life. You were afraid when I took up politics,

afraid when the threats began, afraid when I was arrested.

This is the pain of all mothers whose children have chosen a difficult path — mothers of soldiers who saw their sons off to war, mothers of doctors who fought against an epidemic, mothers of everyone who chose truth over safety.

You are afraid for me, I know, but you are proud of me, and this gives me strength.

I realised how much you love me only when I became a mother myself. Forgive me for this fear.

You know what started after my arrest?

Some articles began to write: "Why is she sticking her head out when she's got two children?" Not directly, but the meaning was clear — a woman with children must choose: either children or a career.

Strange logic, isn't it?

I think the opposite.

When you have children, you learn to think not only about yourself. You know what it means to take responsibility for someone else's life every minute.

Motherhood teaches you to look to the future.

A politician without children thinks in terms of elections: "How will this affect my rating? The next elections? My place in history?"

A politician without children can make a decision that yields a quick result now but destroys the country in twenty years. They don't care — in twenty years, it will be someone else's problem.

But a mother cannot do that.

When you have children, you check every decision with other questions: "How will this affect my children? The world in which they will raise their own children? Will I be able to look them in the eye in ten years and say that I did everything right?"

I cannot make a decision that will bring me a quick benefit today but harm my children tomorrow. I cannot choose what is convenient for me now if it ruins the lives of my grandchildren.

And what happens in politics?

Planning is reduced to a maximum of four years until the next election. Loud promises to boost ratings. Beautiful speeches about a "European future." The main thing is to win the next election, get the next position, and move up a step.

Sandu promised prosperity. Five years have passed. Where are the results?

Moldova has become even poorer. Young people are fleeing the country. Pensioners are impoverished. But Sandu doesn't care — she doesn't have children who will have to live in this ruined country. She has a Romanian passport — she has somewhere to go.

But my children will live here, in Moldova. They won't just be able to leave when everything falls apart, because this is their home.

That is why I cannot think in terms of four years. I think in terms of: what country will I leave for my children? What life will I leave for my grandchildren?

And this is where I see the main difference: a careerist politician thinks about their own future, while a mother-politician thinks about the future of her children.

Now, in my cell, I think about Dan and Mark every night.

I think about how to explain to them why Mom is in prison and whether they will understand that I fought for their future — defending the rights of Gagauzia, not betraying those who voted for me. Not wanting them to grow up in a country where the authorities imprison those who dare to disagree.

These thoughts give me the strength not to give up.

So I categorically disagree that motherhood makes a woman a weak leader. On the contrary, it is her main strength.

I saw your eyes when the verdict was read. They were full of tears, but you stood straight, with dignity. At that moment, I remembered your words: "Don't shed a single tear on your cheeks when you are among people. Later, in your cell, when you are alone — you can cry. But when you are among people — no."

Know this: they will never see my tears. Neither the convoy, nor the guards, nor the judges, nor the prosecutors — none of them will see me cry. I will not give them that victory over me.

There is a proverb: "Diamonds are born under pressure."

They thought the pressure would break me. But the opposite is happening — every blow they strike makes me stronger. Every injustice, every day in this cell, tempers me.

Sometimes at night, when everyone is asleep, I think: what if I had made a different choice back then? Took a different path — quiet, safe, convenient.

And every time I understand: I couldn't have. I simply couldn't have lived otherwise.

So let the pressure continue. I will turn out to be a good diamond.

They will see my tears only once — when I get out of here and come home. When you open the door and I say: "Mommy, meet your daughter." When I hug you, Dan, Mark, when I pet our little bear, Harvey.

Those tears of happiness they can see. Everything else — is just between me and God.

The only thing that truly upsets me is your health.

I was told that you were taken away by ambulance when I was arrested at the airport. I imagined you standing there, watching them take me away, and you couldn't hold yourself together. After the verdict, your blood pressure spiked again, you didn't get out of bed for several days, swallowing pills by the handful.

I know you worry about me every single day. I know you don't sleep well. I know your heart is breaking from the injustice.

Mom, last year we buried Dad. It was the hardest year of my life — losing my father, and then a few months later ending up here. I cannot lose you too!

So let's make a deal: you take care of your health, take your pills on time, don't push yourself to the point of needing an ambulance. And I'll hold on here and not give them any reason to think they've broken me.

I need a healthy mother who will greet me at home.

When we meet again, we'll sit in the kitchen, and you'll bring out your famous marinated chicken wings. And I'll want them so badly that you'll say, "Zhenechka, who's going to wash their hands?"

And I'll go wash my hands, like an obedient daughter.

I also often remember how we celebrated January 14 — Saint Basil's Day. You always baked meat pies, and the whole house smelled of warmth. Remember the last time we celebrated that day all together? You put the pies on the table and said: "Basil the Great defended the weak. You defend them too. May he protect you."

I didn't know then that a few months later I would be here.

Once a priest told me the story of Basil the Great, and it stayed with me forever. This saint was born into a wealthy, noble family in Cappadocia, got a brilliant education at the best schools of his time — studying rhetoric, philosophy, astronomy, medicine. He could have become anything; he could have lived in luxury and honor.

But he chose a different path — serving people and defending the weak.

He became a bishop and began openly opposing the emperor, who wanted to impose a new order on the Church. The emperor threatened him with exile, confiscation of property, even death. Can you imagine that pressure? The emperor — the most powerful man in the empire — threatening you.

Basil simply replied: "I must die for the truth."

He built hospitals, shelters, gave all his wealth to the needy. He spoke these important words: "For whom you wish to live, for them do not fear to die."

I often think about those words, especially at night when I cannot sleep. What do I live for? For my family, for my children, for you, for the people of Gagauzia who believed in me and chose me.

They thought prison would frighten me. But how can you be afraid when you know whom you live for?

Every day I think about home and about your pies. I pray that next Saint Basil's Day we will all be together — around the table, at home.

You always told me: "You must believe in God and be kind-hearted in everything. What we do for others — good or evil — always comes back. Maybe not right away, but it always comes back."

I believe in those words. And I believe that this rule works the same for everyone — for those who do good and for those who do evil.

Until then, pray for me. And know that I love you and miss you so much.

*Your daughter,
Zhenechka*

P.S. Mom, tell Dana and Mark that I love them very much.

Tell Dan that when I come back, we will definitely eat ice cream together. And tell Mark that when Mom is home, we will watch his favourite cartoons again in the evenings.

And pet Harvey for me — let him know that I remember him.

P.P.S. And seriously, send me the recipe for the chicken wings!

I want to copy it into my notebook. To look at it and feel closer to home.

Letter to Ilan Shor No. 1

Ilan Shor is a Moldovan politician, businessman, philanthropist, former mayor (primar) of the city of Orhei (2015–2019), Member of the Parliament of the Republic of Moldova of the 10th and 11th convocations, and leader of the Shor Party and the Victory (Pobeda) bloc.

He is subject to systematic political persecution by the regime of Maia Sandu. In 2023, the Shor Party was banned without valid legal grounds; the party has appealed this decision to the European Court of Human Rights. In 2025, the Victory bloc was denied registration for the parliamentary election.

Ilan Shor,

Today my lawyers brought me the news: you announced that you are closing all social projects in Moldova that you have been involved in for many years.

I understand why you made this decision. All these years, the state machine has been pressuring you. Every institution — the Anti-Corruption Prosecutor's Office, the General Prosecutor's Office, the courts, the security services, the police, and so on — received the task: to destroy your team, your supporters, and you personally.

Every day, you were accused of every conceivable sin; your associates were arrested; you were not allowed to pay out aid to pensioners; obstacles were placed in the way of all your projects. For many years, you were enemy № 1 for the authorities because you showed people how to live better.

I decided to write this letter to you because many people have a quality: they quickly forget all the good that was done for them. Their memory is short, especially when they are brainwashed with the same thing every day.

And that is why below I want to remind people, first and foremost, of what was actually done. Someday, this regime will end, and people must learn the truth, not the version currently broadcast by the main TV channels — those that remain on air with a one-sided, pro-government stance.



You know, Ilan Shor, I was always amazed at how much you did for people throughout the country — from Orhei to Gagauzia, from Taraclia to Bălți.

Dozens of cities and hundreds of villages across Moldova.

You did not divide people into "important" and "unimportant," into big cities and small villages. For you, they were simply people who needed help.

To list everything you have done, I would not have enough of a thick notebook. But I want to mention at least a few important projects:

Social stores and pharmacies helped half a million people. You opened over 100 of these locations, where food and medicine were much cheaper. Thanks to this, elderly people could afford to pay their utility bills or buy something else they needed.

I was always moved to tears when I saw lonely old people. How a grandmother sits at home all day, looking out the window. Or a grandfather with whom no one talks at all. How many such stories do we have: children went elsewhere while elderly parents remained in their villages.

Your "Golden Age" project became a real holiday for them — gatherings with live music for elderly people throughout the country. I know of cases where lonely pensioners found their second halves at our events and started families.

And through "Birthdays," you gave people the attention they lacked so much. Your team congratulated party members on their birthdays — activists called, visited, gave gifts. Sometimes it was the only greeting for a person: it happened that children left and forgot.

Your "My Home — Moldova" project brought people home! You helped people return from abroad to their homeland: you built and distributed social housing, covered travel expenses.

And people returned with whole families — it was real happiness. I know all this not from you, but from what people told me. And yet for a state, nothing is more important and worthy than bringing its citizens back home.

How can the authorities not understand this?

You never stood aside when misfortune hit our compatriots, wherever they were.

When the escalation of the conflict in Israel left our compatriots in a difficult situation and unable to return home, you organised charter flights so people could be with their families again. Such actions are remembered forever.

When I was a child, I was always dragging stray animals home. My mother kept telling me: "Zhenya, you can't save everyone!" And I cried because I understood: they would freeze in the winter; they had nowhere to go. Those who have seen the eyes of stray animals at least once in their lives will understand me. The animal shelter you built in Orhei gave a chance to about 1,000 pets.

More than half have already found their home and loving people.

You performed a miracle with roads. You know how they sometimes say in Moldova: "If you want to see hell, drive on our roads." People drive an hour to travel 20 kilometres to the district centre because they are trying to avoid potholes. Cars fall apart. Ambulances can't get through. Children are late for school. And you took and did: in Orhei alone, you repaired 80% of the roads, while in Chisinau, at most 30% is done. In Gagauzia, thanks to you, more than 100 kilometres of roads were built.

And one more important project I also heard about from people: street lighting appeared in a huge number of settlements in Moldova. I remember being told how in one village in the Glodeni district, a grandmother cried: "So many years walking in the dark. I was afraid to go out in the evening; if something urgent came up, I would wait until morning."

People stopped being afraid to leave their homes in the evening. Children can return from school without stumbling in the dark, and the elderly can get to the store or to their neighbors.

How you created a city of dreams

When you were just running for mayor of Orhei, you

told people: "I am a businessman, not a politician. I have never managed a city before, but I give you my word as a man. If you support me, I will make sure you live better. How? I don't know. But I promise you, I will do it."

And the people supported you, and Orhei became the most prosperous city in Moldova. You fulfilled all your promises and did much more than you promised.

While you were mayor, the city's own revenues grew almost sevenfold.

With your will and competent management, you defeated corruption at the city level.

For a city with a small population, you achieved the impossible — you built your own Disneyland, OrheiLand.

Where there was a vacant lot a few years ago, a giant park has now been built. I saw how children literally freeze with their mouths open at the entrance to the park when they see the first roller coasters in Moldova, long tracks as high as a five-story building, dozens of water slides and trampolines, photo zones, creative workshops, a rope park, musical fountains, a lake with a beach where the purest sand was brought in — and all this for children and adults... completely free.

Over the years of its operation, this park has welcomed millions of children and adults from all over the country and neighboring countries.

In Chisinau, for example, there is not a single free family recreation centre. The attractions that do operate are in disrepair and pose a real threat to children's lives. And even for these, parents pay 80–100 lei for a few minutes.

You know that in 2024, my father passed away. One of my brightest memories is not expensive toys (I didn't have any), but simple things.

For example, I dreamed my whole childhood of going with my father to a big, real ice rink. The Gagauz didn't even dream of such a thing; a real ice rink seemed like something unattainable, a luxury from the capitals. I loved winter and dreamed that one day Dad and I would buy skates and go skating. Instead, we went to a frozen lake. I was in my old sweatpants that rustled in the cold, in knitted mittens that got soaked from the snow and hardened like stone, running on uneven ice. And Dad stood on the shore in his old jacket, hands in his pockets, watching and smiling, and I yelled to him: "Dad, someday we'll go to a real ice rink!" And he would answer, as parents answer when they want to support a dream but understand it's unlikely to come true: "Maybe someday, daughter!" I often remember him here, in prison. And you know what I realised?

You built not just an amusement park. You built a place where families spend time together. And these children, when they themselves become parents, will say to their children in many years: "And I remember how Mom and Dad and I went to OrheiLand."

You gave people what I didn't have with my father. And this is more valuable than any money.

Transformation of Gagauzia

Orhei turned from a provincial town into a symbol of how power should work. As proof that if a person keeps their word, people's lives can be changed for the better.

And when I came to you for help for Gagauzia, you never refused!

Thanks to you, 40,000 people, namely pensioners and public sector employees, received supplements to their salaries and pensions.

Thanks to you, parents of severely ill children knew they

had someone to turn to. We saved children's lives! Every day! Any time of day or night.

Thanks to you, we built over 100 kilometres of roads. And we also built playgrounds, repaired social facilities, equipped schools, organised festivals, concerts, folk festivals, and much, much more.



And I also acutely remember how in late November 2023 in Comrat, a hurricane tore the roof off an apartment building, putting 20 families, mostly pensioners and public sector employees, at risk. Water flooded the apartments, people froze and didn't know where to turn for help. Thanks to you, we restored the roof in a

matter of weeks using extra-budgetary funds. People returned to warmth and safety.

And finally, thanks to you, we made a project that I am especially proud of — we built GagauziyaLand modeled after OrheiLand. Now it is the pride of the region: every guest to Gagauzia goes there first.

And there is an ice rink there. A real one.

An ice rink with smooth ice, music, lights, and a warm changing room where you can dry your mittens. That very ice rink I dreamed of all my childhood.



Dad didn't live to see this by literally a few months. He didn't get to see how my childhood dream became reality. That

very "someday" he talked about on the shore of the frozen lake came, but he is no longer here.

This is one of the most painful points: knowing that if he had lived a little longer, we could have gone there together. I could have taken his hand and said: "Dad, remember how you promised me: 'Maybe someday'? Here it is, this 'someday'."

But I am grateful to you that this "someday" came for thousands of other children and their families. Now they do not run on a frozen lake, imagining a real ice rink. They skate on a real one. And their fathers stand nearby, watching and smiling.

What's next

Ilan, you have done so much that even ten letters would not be enough to list everything: maternal capital, playgrounds, family recreation parks, greening streets, all kinds of holidays in cities and villages where people didn't even have money to buy a Christmas tree. Public reception centres throughout the country — support for veterans, the elderly, large families, targeted assistance to everyone who asked.

You did all this for free for people, and they sometimes didn't even appreciate it. You know, I couldn't understand one thing for a long time. I sat here in my cell and thought: why do people so quickly forget what you did for them? How can one forget all the good in one minute, as soon as the authorities start telling nasty things about you? Is it really true: "Don't do good and you won't face evil"?

And then I looked at you and understood what it was. You never expected this gratitude anyway. You built roads not so that they would thank you later, but because people needed normal roads. You installed lighting in villages not for recognition, but because you cannot live in the dark. You built the ice rink for children not so they would thank you, but because children deserve a normal childhood.

You did this from the heart, because you couldn't do otherwise. And it doesn't matter if they appreciate it now or not.

I am very much looking forward to the day when the regime changes and you will once again launch all these wonderful projects that changed people's lives for the better.

And for now, thank you for the fact that after all this pressure, threats, arrests, and slander, you have remained the same person you were at the beginning: with a big heart, the right values, and an unyielding will.

*With respect and gratitude,
Evghenia Gutul*

Letter to Mihail Kendighelean

Mihail Kendighelean is a member in the Gagauz national movement and one of the founders of the Gagauz autonomy.

In the late 1980s and early 1990s, he was an active participant in the "Gagauz Halkı" movement, which fought for the rights of the Gagauz people.

From 1990 to 1991, he headed the Supreme Council of the unrecognized Gagauz Republic.

On August 23, 1991, together with the president of the unrecognized Gagauz Republic, Stepan Topal, he was arrested by security forces from Chisinau on charges of separatism.

After his release, he continued the struggle for Gagauz autonomy and the rights of the Gagauz people, which culminated in the adoption on December 23, 1994, of the Law of the Republic of Moldova "On the Special Legal Status of Gagauzia (Gagauz Yeri)."

Later, he was elected as a deputy and served as the Chairman of the People's Assembly of Gagauzia. To this day, he lives in Comrat, often receives guests, and shares his experience from the struggle for the rights of the Gagauz people. He is regarded as the spiritual leader of Gagauzia.

Dear Mihail,

History repeats itself. On August 23, 1991, you and Stepan Topal were arrested and sent to a pre-trial detention centre on charges of separatism.

They tried to break you, but it didn't work. You held firm, and that is why we have autonomy today.

35 years have passed. I am sitting in Prison No. 13 in Chisinau.

In 1991, you were accused of separatism. Today, I am accused of "illegal party financing." The wording is different, but the goal is the same: to force the Gagauz to renounce their identity.

What is happening now is not isolated cases of pressure. It is the systematic destruction of our rights, enshrined in the Law of 1994. The very law you fought for in the early 90s.

And here is how it is happening:

1. We are being deprived of the right to appoint the prosecutor of Gagauzia.

In April 2025, the Constitutional Court made a decision: the People's Assembly of Gagauzia can no longer participate in the appointment of the chief prosecutor of the autonomy. We learned about this after the decision.

Previously, the prosecutor was appointed with the consent of the People's Assembly – our main legislative body, elected by the people. Now, it is Chisinau's privilege done by the Superior Council of Prosecutors and the Prosecutor General of Moldova.

What does this mean in practice?

Suppose tomorrow a case is opened against a deputy for political reasons, as against me. Will a prosecutor appointed by Chisinau defend the autonomy? Or will he carry out the orders of those who appointed him?

Or, for example, a farmer from Comrat complains about an official from Chisinau who blocks subsidies for Gagauzia. Will a prosecutor accountable only to the central authorities investigate this claim? Or will he sweep the case under the rug?

In 1991, you were arrested without explanation. Today we face the same arbitrariness but this time it is backed up by court decisions.

2. We were deprived of the Court of Appeal in Comrat.

The Court of Appeal in Comrat confirmed the results of elections for the Governor and the People's Assembly. It was a court on the territory of the autonomy that knew our laws and understood our specificities.

Now, election results will be confirmed by judges from the "South" subdivision. People who have never lived in Gagauzia,

do not know the Gagauz language, do not understand how the autonomy works.

What will happen if Chisinau, through these courts, decides not to recognize the people's choice? This is an instrument to block the entire electoral system of the autonomy.

3. I was not included in the Moldovan government.

By law, the Governor is a member of the government. But President Maia Sandu has not signed the decree for my inclusion for two years. She publicly stated that she "is not in a hurry" with this decision. The participation of the Governor in the government has been turned into a political bargaining chip.

4. We are being financially strangled.

In October 2023, the Moldovan parliament adopted amendments to the Tax Code. Previously, when enterprises in Gagauzia bought goods with VAT, the state refunded that tax from the state budget. Now they decided: let Gagauzia itself refund the VAT from its own budget.

What did this mean? Gagauzia would lose 100 million lei per year (5,000,000 euros). Money for schools, hospitals, roads, teachers' salaries would have to be used to refund VAT to enterprises.

The Constitutional Court annulled these amendments in March 2024, declaring them illegal. But the attempt itself is telling: to strangle us economically so that people would say "Our government is not coping" and blame us, not Chisinau.

In 2023 2024, they stopped funding 115 personal assistants for people with disabilities. People who care for the elderly, for children with special needs. Their salaries were paid from the state budget. Chisinau said: pay yourselves. We took on these expenses.

An elderly person with a disability is left without help because Chisinau decided to punish Gagauzia.

5. We are being deprived of the Gagauz language.

In early 2025, the Ministry of Education removed the position of Gagauz language teacher from the payroll of kindergartens. More than 70 teachers were threatened with dismissal, and more than 5,000 children were threatened with losing the opportunity to learn their native language.

Do you remember how we rejoiced when the Gagauz language was removed from the UNESCO list of endangered languages? That was our common victory. We rolled out programmes, created the Gagauz Language Rescue Foundation, invested our funds, strength, soul. And now, with one stroke of a pen by a Chisinau official, all that is being undone.

After the outcry, the position was reinstated, but funding was cut. It's like saying: "Yes, you can teach your children Gagauz, but just a little, so it doesn't get in the way."

The Industrial College in Comrat, built in 2023 with funds from Turkey through TİKA, is still not operating. A modern building, laboratories, equipment. Turkish brothers invested millions so that Gagauz youth could receive vocational education. But the Ministry of Education requires instruction only in Romanian. More than 95% of Gagauz gymnasium graduates do not know Romanian well enough for engineering subjects. The youth have been cut off from vocational education. The building stands empty, our children are left without a future.

6. The "European Village" programme: discrimination on political grounds

This is a Moldovan government programme that allocates money for village development such as road repairs, schools, water supply, landscaping. Villages submit applications for funding their projects.

In 2024, out of 612 approved projects, only 15 were from Gagauzia. That's 2.5%. In 2023, out of 18 applications from

Gagauzia mayors, not one was approved. Not a single one!

Sandu openly said that only those who support her and the European course will receive funding.

Representatives of the Executive Committee link this to a political decision due to the low support for President Sandu. In the 2024 elections, only 2.26% of Gagauz voters voted for Sandu. In the referendum, 94.84% voted against European integration. This is the payback.

And let's be honest: have you seen a real "European Village" in Moldova after the launch of this much hyped project, except for the beautiful, modern villages made by our team?

7. Intimidation of officials and citizens.

After my arrest, a campaign began to intimidate the members of the Executive Committee, deputies of the People's Assembly, and every resident of the autonomy. They are summoned to the prosecutor's office, inspections are carried out, they are threatened with criminal cases, and banned from traveling abroad. People who go to rallies in my support are fined.

And yet, in the early 90s, thanks to you, we were not afraid and achieved autonomy.

8. Blocking of international aid.

All this time, philanthropist Ilan Shor and his partners have been helping us. He allocated money, changed the lives of Gagauzia, arranged international aid, supported farmers, modernized schools, repaired hospitals. He didn't ask who we voted for, he just helped.

In 2024, Gagauzia was hit by drought, hail, floods. The agricultural sector suffered huge losses. Farmers cried, crops died, there was nothing to feed livestock. We were on the brink of a humanitarian disaster.

Ilan Shor arranged with Russia, through the ANO Eurasia, for 12,000 tons of humanitarian aid: diesel fuel, mineral fertilizers, grain seeds for sowing on 150,000 hectares. The value of this cargo was over 400,000,000 lei (20,000,000 euros) – an entire year's worth of Gagauzia's own budget revenues.

The People's Assembly sent an appeal to the Moldovan parliament asking permission to receive the aid. The aid was blocked. Political interests are more important than starving people. Farmers remained without seeds and without hope.

Mihail, the authorities call us "separatists," as they did you in 1991. But you know the truth: we never wanted to secede from Moldova. We wanted to be heard and respected.

In 1994, the Law "On the Special Legal Status of Gagauzia" was adopted. It was a compromise: Moldova remained a unitary state, Gagauzia received autonomy. It was a peaceful path, unique in the post Soviet world.

We have always obeyed the law and never called for secession. We simply wanted our rights, enshrined in the 1994 Law, to be respected. But today we are punished for defending those rights and remembering our history.

We are not separatists. We want to live on our own land, speak our own language, teach our children our own history, and not be thrown in prison for it.

You know what scares me most? The young generation of Gagauzia does not know what you went through. They do not know that someone sat in prison for their right to study in their native language.

They do not know that someone risked their life for the right to elect their own leaders. That autonomy was not a gift from above, but was literally fought for.

Today, young Gagauz are 20-25 years old. They were born into autonomy; for them, it is a given. They don't remember 1990, when people went out to squares not knowing whether they would be shot. They don't remember 1991, when you were arrested. They don't remember how you and Stepan Topal defended our right to exist.

And now, when the authorities in Chisinau are trying step by step to destroy the autonomy, many young people simply do not understand the scale of the threat. They think: "So they removed the prosecutor, so what? So they closed the Court of Appeal, well, okay. Why do we need it?"

I ask you: continue to speak out, continue to tell our story. Your voice is the voice of those who fought for autonomy in the 90s, who were not afraid of prison and threats. It is the voice that is so needed by our people today.

You went through this in 1991 and you stood firm. Now it is my turn to stand and not break. Thank you for not letting us forget what we are fighting for.

Please pass my respects to your wife, Ada. Take care of yourself, Mihail.

*With deep respect and gratitude,
Evghenia Gutul*

Letter to Vladimir Putin

Vladimir Putin is President of the Russian Federation and one of the most influential world leaders.

On March 6, 2024, Evghenia Gutul met with Vladimir Putin in Sochi.

The meeting discussed issues of socio-economic development of the autonomy, support for the Russian language, and cultural ties between Gagauzia and Russia.

Following this meeting, a number of projects were implemented, including pension supplements for Gagauzia residents.

Dear Vladimir,

I am writing to you from Prison No. 13 in Chisinau. We met on March 6, 2024, in Sochi, at the World Youth Festival. Now I am sitting in a solitary confinement cell in a Moldovan prison. Less than two years have passed, and life has turned completely upside down.

After my detention, official letters were sent to you in my name through diplomatic channels. But this letter is different: not from the Governor to the President, but from person to person. I don't know if you will ever read it, but I had to write it.

You have thousands of meetings a year. For you, it's a work routine, a daily schedule, protocol events. For me, that meeting in March was one of the main events of my life.

I am not a politician with experience in international negotiations, not a diplomat accustomed to such meetings. I represent the interests of a small autonomy in the south of Moldova with a population of 155,000. We are trying to survive, to preserve ourselves, not to let them erase us from the political map.

Now the Moldovan authorities consider our meeting my crime. I consider it an honor.

I am writing this letter to thank you and to explain the impact of your backing for such nations like ours – small but not ready to give up.

Why they are prosecuting me

The Moldovan authorities accuse me of "pro-Russian views." For them, it is a crime. For me, it is simply my life.

I am Gagauz. We are a Turkic-speaking Orthodox Christian people — a unique combination that makes us who we are. We have our own language, our own traditions, our own songs. But I grew up in two cultures at once.

Grandma baked Gagauz pies and sang to me, and Mom could sing songs in Gagauz and at the same time cook the traditional Russian herring salad for New Year's. At home, we spoke Gagauz, but at school, I learned to read in Russian. The first book I read myself was "Kolobok" ("The Bun on the Run").

The first word I spoke was in Russian, and my mother taught me to pray the "Our Father" in the same language she spoke to me every day. On Sundays, Grandma took me to the Orthodox church, where the service was in Church Slavonic, but the sermon was in Russian so everyone could understand.

We watched Soviet films — "Moscow Does Not Believe in Tears," "Office Romance," "The Irony of Fate." It was part of our childhood, woven into life as naturally as the smell of Grandma's pies. Russian culture did not replace Gagauz culture — it walked alongside

it, intertwined with it so that we didn't even think about it.

I was brought up to respect the immortal feat of WWII veterans.

I was in shock to realize that someone could come and punish me for what I grew up with. For the Russian language, for the memory of Victory, for "Our Father" in Russian. For everything that had been part of my life since birth.

Two cultures — Gagauz and Russian — walked alongside me all my life. They did not fight each other, but complemented each other, made me whole. When the Sandu regime says I am "pro-Russian," they are actually demanding: "Choose one. Renounce the other. Tear yourself in two."

But a real leader understands: a people is strong not when they are forced to choose, but when they are allowed to be themselves — completely, with everything they have. Gagauz. Orthodox. Turkic-speaking. Russian-speaking. All at the same time.

I cannot renounce any part of myself. Even if it means seven years in prison.

Preservation of the Russian Orthodox Church

As I said, we are a Turkic people of the Orthodox faith. For the Gagauz, these are not just words. Orthodoxy is what makes us who we are, what distinguishes us from all other Turkic peoples.

I grew up in a family of faithful Christians. Before sleep, we recited the "Our Father." Every Sunday we went to church. I remember that feeling when you enter the sanctuary: the scent of incense, the flickering of candles, the warm twilight, the voices of the choir. My soul would become calm, as if I had come home. That feeling cannot be explained in words, but every Orthodox Christian knows it.

My favourite holiday is the Patronal Feast Day of our church, when the whole village gathers together, when after the service people embrace and congratulate one another.

My children have been reciting prayers since birth. I wanted to pass on to them the same thing — that sense of peace in the church, that scent of incense, that connection with God. This is not ostentatious religiosity — it is part of our life.

Our Metropolis of Moldova has always been part of the Russian Orthodox Church.

This is our history, our spiritual connection. For the Gagauz, the church is a symbol of who we are.

Currently, the Orthodox Church is facing persecution. The Moldovan authorities are trying to split it, to force priests to join the Metropolis of Bessarabia, which is subordinated to Bucharest. They are trying to forcibly change what has been shaped over centuries.

This is not just a church reform. It is an attempt to tear away another part of our identity. First they ban the Russian language, then they punish us for the memory of World War II, now they have come for the church. They are methodically destroying everything that connects the Gagauz to our roots.

St. John Chrysostom said: "The church is not wall and roof, but faith and life." Profound words! Faith does not obey anyone's decrees; it lives in people. And no persecution will force the Gagauz to renounce what they have believed in for centuries.

The last words of my father

On March 6, 2024, we met at the "Sirius" centre at the World Youth Festival. For me, it was one of the most important days of my life.

I remember being nervous from the very morning — worried,

thinking about what to say, how to explain the situation in Gagauzia in a way that you would understand that we really needed help. I remember every minute of that day.

But when our meeting began, all the worries disappeared. You spoke simply. There was no sense of distance between a president and the head of a small autonomy. I felt that we were heard.

This meeting brought concrete results for Gagauzia. We agreed on supplements to pensions and salaries. Support appeared that Chisinau did not give us and was not going to give us.

I fully understood that after this meeting, a wave of negative hype would fall upon me. And so it happened. I knew I was risking a lot, but that did not stop me, because I had to do what I did — ask for help for my people.



Even now, sitting in my cell, I do not regret my decision for a second.

...The day before our meeting, my father suffered a stroke. He needed to be urgently taken to the hospital, but the road to it was destroyed: potholes, bumps; a person in critical condition cannot be transported on such a road. We had to wait until his condition stabilized. Because of this, precious hours that could have saved his life were lost...

I gave myself a promise then: this road will be repaired.

When I returned from Sochi, I literally rushed from the plane to the hospital. Papa was still alive. I showed him the photo of our meeting with you; he looked and cried. And then he told me: "You, daughter, will only be protected by him." Meaning you.

These were the last words of my father. A few hours later, he died.

At the time, I didn't attach much importance to my father's words and couldn't have imagined that just over a year later, they would prove prophetic: I would indeed find myself in prison and again ask for help from you.

I am very glad that my father saw the photos from this meeting, that he saw that his daughter met the man he considered a real leader.

Now, sitting in my cell, I understand: my father was right.

Why I am imprisoned

On August 5, 2025, the court handed down its verdict: seven years in a penal colony. Confiscation of property. I will attach the case materials to this letter; you can see for yourselves. It is completely fabricated.

Formally, I am accused of illegally financing a political party. In practice, I am being prosecuted because I did not renounce

my people, because I did not surrender my mandate as Bashkan. I am being prosecuted because I worked with Ilan Shor — a philanthropist who invested enormous funds in Gagauzia.

With his help, we built roads and sidewalks, playgrounds, modernized schools and kindergartens, built social housing, and upgraded hospitals and health centres.

We built over 100 kilometres of roads using extra-budgetary funds, opened GagauziyaLand park, provided supplements to 40,000 pensioners and public sector employees. We did what the state was supposed to do but did not.

And yes, we repaired that very road that could have saved Dad's life.

But how many more people have died prematurely because of broken roads, because the state forgot about us?

I am also being prosecuted for my meeting with you. For not supporting the course of breaking with Russia, with the Russian language, with Russian culture. On my own initiative, we declared the year 2025 in Gagauzia as the Year of the 80th Anniversary of Victory in World War II. Chisinau reacted extremely hostilely and demanded that we celebrate May 9 as "Europe Day." We did not back down: we renovated the memorial in Comrat with funds from a philanthropist, held meetings with veterans in schools, organised lectures about the war so that children would not forget who their grandfathers were and what they fought for. We want to preserve our historical memory.

Thank you

Vladimir, I am writing this letter, first of all, to thank you.

Thank you that, back in March 2024, you listened to the head of an autonomy that half the world hadn't even heard of. Thank you that the problems of 155,000 Gagauz mattered to you.

You could have refused the meeting with the words: "This is

an internal matter of Moldova," but you gave me the opportunity to talk about the problems of the Gagauz.

After our meeting, we felt support: for a small people suffocating under the pressure of their own state, this is more important than it may seem. When they call you an enemy for speaking your native language, when they try to erase your identity, when they strangle you economically — the very fact that you were heard at the highest level gives you the strength not to give up.

After this meeting, my people saw that there is a power in the world ready to listen to them. There is a leader who did not dismiss the problems of a small nation. And this gave the Gagauz what they needed most — hope.

Thank you for that.

Vladimir, you once said: "For me, my friends, and my family, the main toast is this — to Russia."

And that is right. Every leader must have a primary loyalty — to their people, to their land, to their truth. It doesn't matter where you are: in the president's chair or in a prison cell.

My toast is to Gagauzia.

*With respect and hope,
Evghenia Gutul
From Prison No. 13, Chisinau*



To My Sons

To My Son Daniil

My dear adult son,

Danechka, today I decided to write you a long letter that you can re-read and feel that I am near, although kilometres and concrete walls separate us.

When it's hard for you, open this letter. If you suddenly want to give up, read it again. If you ever get angry at me for my choice, read it once more.

Today I want to remind you how much I love you. To tell you why I am here. Not the narrative for the news, not what the judges say, but the truth. To tell you what these walls taught me and why a person cannot be deprived of true freedom, even if they are put in a small room.

And, of course, to remind you of how strong you are!

Most of all in the world, I want to hug you right now, really hug you. So tightly that you would even say to me: "Mom, enough, I'm not little anymore!" But for now, the only thing I can do is hug you through these pages.

Your Papa told me that you occasionally ask him: "Why is Mom in prison? What did she do that they separated her from us?"

I decided to answer you myself. First of all, because you are a grown-up guy; in a couple of years, you'll be of age.

Secondly, because the official narrative and the truth are two different things.

Do you remember when you were eight years old and came home in tears? You told me how older boys took a backpack from a younger schoolboy and threw it back and forth to each other until it tore.

And the other kids stood and watched in silence; everyone was afraid to speak up. And afterwards, you cried a lot because you couldn't do it either.

You asked me later: "Would you have spoken up?"

And I said: "When you are small and weak, it's hard to stop someone who is stronger than you. But when you grow up and become an adult, that is when you have a choice — to speak up or to remain silent."

Do you remember this story? I remember it down to the smallest details, because it was in that moment that I gave you a promise: your mother will never be the one who stands aside.

So, son, I am here because I spoke up. I did not turn away when our people were suffering.

I was not put in prison for a crime. I was put in prison because I turned out to be inconvenient. Because I did not betray the people who believed in me.

I kept the promise I made to you: I spoke up for them. Otherwise, I simply wouldn't be able to look you in the eyes: after

all, I myself taught you the concepts of courage and dignity.

You know, the hardest part of my choice is that it affected you and your little brother. I know that you matured quickly because of this situation. Papa told me how you hold up, how you take care of Mark.

How you take him to your room, sit him next to you, turn on the computer. You play, and he sits and looks at the screen, repeating words after you. And, of course, Harvey is with you), he settles at your feet and lies there like a white bear cub, on guard.

I am very sad that you had to grow up so fast. Right now, you should be thinking about first love, about friends, about your dreams, and not explaining to your little brother why Mom won't come home.

I am afraid you will grow up without me, and I will miss the most important things.

Your graduation. I imagine you standing on stage in a suit, so grown-up, receiving your diploma.

Your first real love. When you come home and can't fall asleep because her name, her smile, every word she said are spinning in your head.

Your first serious choice: university, profession, a path that will determine your whole life.

Maybe I won't be there and won't be able to say: "I am proud of you." I won't be able to simply be there, silently sitting on the edge of your bed while you talk, and listen.

I remember a couple of years ago you asked me: "And how do you know if you're making the right choice or not?" I answered

you: "Nobody knows for sure. But there is one way to understand: if you are making a choice out of fear, then it's probably not your choice. But if it's out of interest, out of love, out of faith — then it is your choice. And even if you make a mistake, it will be your mistake."

You nodded. And I thought then that we still had so much time together going forward. I would have time to tell you everything, to teach you everything. And then the time ran out.

I have to confess to you: my biggest fear is that you will grow up thinking "Mom chose not me." That you will be angry with me, looking at the missed birthdays, your graduation, the moments when you felt bad and I wasn't there, and think: "She chose her struggle, not me."

Son, that is not true.

I want you to know one thing. It was not a choice between you and my convictions. I chose to live in a way that you could be proud of me, so that when you look at your mother, you see a person who did not agree to live "on her knees."

Son, I don't know how to put my love for you into words.

I loved you from the very moment I found out I was pregnant. I looked in the mirror at my belly and thought: "Inside me is a person! My son!" And my heart expanded so much that I thought it would burst. I swear!

I really wanted to get pregnant. And when it happened, it was a joy not only for me. Because your grandfather always wanted a son, but he had daughters: me and your aunt. And now — a grandson! His first grandson, a boy.

I remember how in the last months of pregnancy, Grandma

constantly talked to my belly: "Well, when, my little one? When will we meet you?" They couldn't wait to see you!

And then you were born.

When they put you on my chest — so warm, with your eyes squeezed shut — you opened your eyes and looked at me. And I said to myself: "Here it is, the greatest happiness."

There were several other women in the maternity ward. I looked at their children and thought: "No, mine is definitely the most beautiful!" (Funny, right? But every mother thinks like that about their child:)

You know what particularly makes me happy now? That you got to know Grandpa. Grandpa loved you so much! When he looked at you, his eyes held such pride, such happiness.

I love you at every age.

When you were a baby and woke up at night, and I rocked you, half-asleep. When you went to first grade, so serious with your backpack, and looked back at the school door to make sure I was still there.

When you entered your teenage years and became prickly and closed off, but I saw that beneath this prickliness was still the same boy who needed love.

I remember when I was still at home, you would constantly come up to me and say: "Mom, they won't put you in prison. You are the best person I know. You are guilty of nothing."

I know that justice will prevail and we will meet one day. Probably, when we see each other, you will already be much taller than me. Maybe by a whole head or even two. And I will have to stretch up on my tiptoes to kiss you on the cheek.

You will have a different voice, broad shoulders, stubble.

But you will still be my boy, my son, my pride.

In the meantime — live your life to the fullest!



Value freedom. Real freedom — the one inside.

Know that wherever I am, I am always with you. Currently, there are tens of kilometres, concrete walls, iron doors, and guards between us.

They can keep me here as long as they want, but I know for sure: love is always stronger than walls.

*I love you infinitely,
Mom.*

To My Son Mark

Hello, sonny!

My little, my wonderful boy Mark.

Mom is writing you a letter. I am currently in a different place, far from you. I know you are still very little and won't understand everything now. But I asked Papa to read this letter to you when you grow up a little, so you know how much Mom loves you.

My little one, I can't be with you right now, but I always think of you.

When you wake up in the morning, I also wake up and think of you.

When you play, I imagine your laughter.

When you go to sleep, I look at the stars and know that you are seeing the same stars.

A fairy tale for you

Mark, do you remember there was a fairy tale called "Guess How Much I Love You"? I don't remember it all exactly, but I'll try to tell you.

There lived a little hare with soft ears and a fluffy tail. One evening, the little hare asked his mother: "Mom, how much do you love me?"

The mother hare smiled and spread her paws wide-wide: "I love you this much."

"And I love you THIS much!" said the little hare and spread his paws even wider.

"I love you to the highest mountain!" said the mother.

"And I love you to the moon!" shouted the little hare.

Then the mother hare patted his ear and whispered: "And I love you to the moon and back."

My little one, that is how much I love you: to the moon and back. To the farthest star and back. To the highest mountain and back.

And you know what? Even if there are walls between us, even if Mom is far away, my love is still with you.

What I remember about you

My little boy, I remember everything about you.

I remember how you were born: so small, warm, with tiny fingers.

I remember your first steps. You wobbled like a funny little penguin! Papa was holding your hands, and we were so happy.

I remember your laugh: it rings like a little bell.

I remember your favourite toys, your favourite fairy tales. I remember how you love to jump on the bed.

I remember every one of your smiles. I keep everything in my heart, like the most precious treasure.

Mom's promise

Tonight, when you go to bed, close your little eyes and imagine that Mom is nearby. I kiss your forehead and whisper: "Good night, my little one. Mom loves you. May you have the sweetest dreams."

And in the morning, when you open your eyes, look out the window. Do you see the sun? It touched me first, and then flew to you. I sent it.

At night, look at the moon. I also look at it at the same time. We are looking at the same moon, my little one.



Mark, I give you my word: I will return.

I imagine this day every minute. You will run up to me, and I will lift you in my arms, you are already so big, but I will lift you anyway! We will hug for a long, long time.

We will go for a walk and look at the birds and the clouds. We will sit together and read your favourite books.

Then we will go to Grandma's. She will bake her delicious meat pies. You know how delicious they are? Mmm! And maybe Grandma will let us knead the dough and make pies together. Your hands will be covered in flour, and we will laugh.

And until I am far away, remember one thing: there is an invisible thread between your little heart and mine. It cannot be broken. When you are sad, think of me and tug on this thread with your thoughts. I will immediately feel it and send you my love.

Grow up strong, my boy. Listen to Papa and your brother; they are your protectors.

Kisses, so tight!

***Your mom, who loves you more than life itself.
To the moon and back.***

***Letter to Father Anatolie,
Archbishop of Cahul and Comrat***

Not long ago, we stood together in the temple and prayed together. You awarded me the Medal of the Holy Great Martyr George. I accepted the award with joy in my heart, understanding this as a blessing for service to the people and the faith.



Father Anatolie!

I remember once hearing a priest ask a question to children: "Where does the sky begin?" They all rushed to point upwards, to the clouds, and say: "The sky is above, and God is there too." And he answered them: "You are the sky."

Now I am sitting in a cell where outside the window I see only a wall and barbed wire, and not a piece of the sky. And every day I remember these words and say to myself: "The sky is in me. God is with me." And as long as I remember this, no prison can deprive me of freedom of spirit.

Two days before my arrest, on March 23, 2025, I attended a service in the Temple of the Kazan Icon of the Mother of God in Ceadir-Lunga. Together with hundreds of parishioners, we prayed for the well-being of Gagauzia. I did not know then that this would be the last liturgy before incarceration. I did not know that in two days, on March 25, I would be detained.

Now I understand: God was preparing me for this path. He showed me the sky within myself so that I would not break when only walls remained around me.

I was a child when I first felt this. I remember I was nine years old. It was during the spring holiday of Hederlez. I woke

up before dawn and ran barefoot into the yard. They told me that on this day, you must wash your face with dew before sunrise. I washed myself with ice-cold water and returned to the house.

Then the locals from our street gathered at the neighbors' house. There was such a feeling of a holiday, lightness: songs, laughter, old people sitting in the shade, children running. I stood in the middle of this yard and looked at the people — at my grandmother, at the neighbors, at the girls dancing in a circle, and suddenly I thought very clearly: "This is how people should live."

I dawned upon me that I want to do something for people. I want them to always live like this — together, in joy, helping each other. At that moment, I felt something strange: as if someone touched me, although no one was nearby.

Later, I was told a parable: when God wants to tell a person their purpose, He touches their face and he whispers. That was exactly the feeling, as if God became visible for a second and said: "This is your path."

For me, faith is not something I chose, but something I was born with.

I grew up in a family where every Sunday, Grandma took me by the hand and took me to church. I was about five or six years old. I stood next to her during the service, looking at the icons, at the candles, listening to the singing. I didn't understand everything back then, but I felt: there is something important here. God is here.

And then there were the patronal feast days — my favourite days of the year. The whole village gathered in the church, and later around a large table. Homemade noodles, fresh bread, meat, pastries. But the main thing was not the food. The main thing was that feeling when the whole village becomes one family. When

the elderly bless the young, when children run between the tables, when the priest sits at the head and everyone prays together before the meal.

I remember how once my grandmother leaned over to me and quietly said: "You see how happy people are? That's because God is here, with us." I looked at the faces around me, and indeed I saw it. Everyone was happy, everyone was radiant.

I grew up with this feeling, and when I became Governor, I understood: I want to do the same thing that my grandmother did. I want people to feel that unity again.

We started visiting villages on their patronal feast days. We went to Etulia on the feast of Saint Athanasius the Great, the patron saint of my native village. We went to Comrat to celebrate the feast of Saint John the Forerunner in the cathedral. We came to Vulcănești for the Intercession of the Most Holy Theotokos. We visited Svetlii, Cazaclia, Carbalia, Beșalma, Baurci, Chiriet-Lunga, Congazcicul de Sus, Cioc-Maidan, Rusca Clișeva, Djoltai, Dezghingea, Ferapontievca, and many other places.

We did not come just for the sake of "a formal event." We came to share the holiday with the people: first the liturgy, then a celebration for the whole village — trampolines for children, concerts, treats, fireworks. Not because we "had to," but because we wanted to give people back that feeling that I remembered from childhood.

Something happened to me during the patronal feast celebration in the village of Baurci. I remember that after the Divine Liturgy, Father Petru was giving his sermon and looked at me: "Be strong, pay no attention to the negativity directed at you. There will always be envious people. Rise above it and do not respond in kind. Do good to everyone, and good will surely return."

It is with these words that I still live.

Father, our church is now under pressure like never before.

Our Metropolis of Moldova, which has been part of the Russian Orthodox Church for centuries, is being split apart.

Priests are being forced to join the Metropolis of Bessarabia. The Romanian Parliament allocated 2 million euro to achieve this goal. Every Moldovan priest who switches sides is promised a one-time payment of 2,000 euros, plus a monthly salary of 450–600 euros.

And this is no longer about faith — this is about politics.

Priests are summoned for "preventive talks" to the Information and Security Service (ISS). You were also summoned there. The reason is that you serve in your diocese in Gagauzia, at the events organised by our team.

Archbishop Marchel was not allowed to go to Jerusalem for the Holy Fire. He was stopped at the airport on the eve of Easter.

It was a public humiliation of an archpastor during Holy Week. The media later called this event "an act of spiritual terror."

In the villages, they are trying to seize churches by force. In the village of Gidigich, the Church of the Intercession of the Most Holy Theotokos was taken away and handed over to the Romanian Church. In the village of Grinăuți, representatives of the Metropolis of Bessarabia tried for several hours to occupy the church building while parishioners stood at the doors and would not let them in.

They are trying to take away from us more than 800 monastery and church buildings. They stop at nothing: they even cut the power lines leading to the churches.

This is not just pressure on the Church — it is a war against our identity.

We, the Gagauz, are a Turkic-speaking people, but Orthodox. This is a paradox that has held us together for centuries. By destroying the Church, they are destroying the last thing that unites us as a people.

Father, you have always been a role model to me. When you were summoned to the ISS for a "preventive conversation," you were not afraid and did not back down. You showed all of us what it means to be faithful to God not in words but in deeds.

And imagine, the priest from Ceadîr-Lunga wanted to visit me, but he was not allowed to see me. The authorities have lapsed so low that they are afraid to let a priest into the prison.

In my cell I have an icon of the Mother of God. My mother gave it to me. She said that you invited her to the Sunday service, which was attended by many bishops of our country. Together they prayed for my release. I know: hundreds of people prayed for me that day. This icon is a reminder that I am not alone.

Another icon was given to me by the priest who serves in the church at the prison. I go there when the administration gives permission. Together with the church rector, we pray. In those moments, the walls disappear. Receiving communion there was an important moment for me.

I also received from Turkey myrrh oil from Saint Nicholas the Wonderworker. Saint Nicholas led innocent people out of captivity. I believe in his intercession and ask for his help every day.

I also often think about Saint Athanasius the Great — the patron saint of my native village of Etulia. He was sent into exile five times for defending the true faith. He was persecuted, slandered, they tried to break him, but he remained steadfast in his faith to the end.

If he endured five exiles, if he remained himself through all the trials, then so can I. God does not give trials greater than a person can bear.

Another issue I cannot remain silent about is traditional family values.

God created us as men and women; He created the family as the union of husband and wife in which children are born and raised. This is the foundation of life, what any healthy society stands on. But what is happening in the world today is unacceptable to me as a believer.

I recently read a story from Canada: an adult man decided that he was a five-year-old girl and went to live with a foster family, where they accepted him as a child. They call this "freedom of choice," but I ask: where is the boundary of common sense?

I consider it unacceptable when a child is given the right to decide what gender they are, when schools introduce lessons on gender change, when children are told that they can choose whether to be boys or girls. A child cannot make such decisions; they do not yet understand the consequences.

I am against the propaganda of non-traditional relationships. But this does not mean that I am against people. Everyone is free to live as they wish – behind closed doors. But when they make it public, when it is imposed on children through parades, I cannot agree with that.

Because I believe: God created us the way we are. And this is not an accident, but His design. Children should grow up in families with a mother and a father, not because I am against anyone, but because I stand for strong families and for the future of our people.

I know I will be accused of intolerance, but I am not afraid of those accusations. I am defending not a political position, but what I believe with all my heart.

In my cell I have a lot of time for reflection — about life, about people, about what has happened to me. I could curse every day those who stood behind my sentence, for what they have done to me and my family. But Christ teaches us something else.

He said on the cross: "Forgive them, Lord, for they know not what they do." And I repeat these words every day, standing in my cell before the icon.

It is hard for me to accept this and to forgive. I believe in the law of the boomerang; I believe that good will sooner or later triumph over evil. I believe that in addition to human judgment, there is the main judgment — God's judgment — and everyone will be held accountable before God.

I am not angry at God for having to go through such trials — God gives us trials that we can pass. I have somehow forgiven them for myself, but I cannot forgive them for my children. They have deprived not only me of my freedom, but they have deprived my minor children of maternal tenderness, love, and attention.

I am learning to forgive. Of course, it is very difficult, but I try to forgive, because hatred eats away at the soul from within, and I do not want them to take away not only my freedom but also my soul.

Forgiveness in Orthodoxy is not weakness; it is strength. When you forgive, you first of all set yourself free.

Forgiveness is a difficult path. I will not say that I have already walked it to the end, but I choose to walk this path anew every day, because I do not want hatred to break me.

Father, I do not know how much longer this trial will last. I do not know when I will see my children, when I will be able to hug them again, when I will return to my people. But I know one thing: faith gives me strength. The prayers that are offered for me in the churches of Gagauzia, in Comrat, in Etulia, in all our towns and villages — this is what gives me strength me here, behind these walls.

I ask you to pray for my release. Pray for my children, who are growing up without their mother. Pray for the Gagauz people, for our Orthodox Church, for all those who are now under pressure and in trials. Pray also for those who put me here — that God may touch their hearts and open their eyes to what they are doing.

I often remember that morning when I stood in the yard, looked at the people at the table, and suddenly felt God's touch. At the time I did not understand what that meant. Now I understand: He was preparing me for this path so that I would not break when things became hard.

*I often think to myself: "Heaven is within me.
God is within me."*

*And as long as this is true, no walls can deprive me
of freedom.*

May God keep you safe.

*With deep respect and gratitude,
Evghenia Gutul*

Letter to the Gagauz People

I am from Etulia. It is a village in the very south of Gagauzia.

When they ask me why I am in prison, I close my eyes, remember my childhood, and see the street where I grew up. Vineyards along the road. Houses with brightly coloured shutters. Wells in the yards where the water was cold even in the July heat.

I remember running barefoot on this land in the summer. My feet burned; Mom yelled: "Put your shoes on!" And I couldn't. I wanted to feel the earth with my soles and for it to feel me.

Even then, I knew: "This is our land."

Once, a grandmother from a neighboring village told me about her ancestors: "My great-grandfather came to Budjak in the early 19th century and saw an empty steppe. There was absolutely nothing. The first year we lived in a dugout. For four months we hammered at the ground – we went forty metres deep before we found water. When we found it, my great-grandfather cried. Not from joy – from exhaustion.

Then he built a house of clay and planted vines. For the first three years the vine did not bear fruit, and every evening he went to the vineyard to check on it. My great-grandmother said: 'Give up, it won't grow.' And he said: 'It will grow. This is our land now.' In the fourth year he harvested the first crop."

That is how our villages were built. Each one a victory over the steppe. The house preserves the family's history, the cemetery connects the generations.

That is why I am sitting here. The youth must not forget its roots. In kindergartens, schools, universities, the Gagauz language must be heard more often.

In twenty years, our villages must not become empty, and the cemeteries must not be overgrown with weeds. Someone must have the right to say about this land: "It is ours."

Dear my compatriots,

Bän gagauzkayim. I am Gagauz.

I say this to myself every day in my cell: in the morning, when I wake up, and in the evening, before I fall asleep. It is my anchor. It is what prevents me from breaking.

First – connection with the land.

That is what makes you Gagauz. Remembering where you come from.

Second – diligence.



Dmitri Karachoban from Beşalma spent thirty years collecting items of Gagauz everyday life from all over Gagauzia. He went from village to village, recorded songs, bought old things with his own money. He worked as a teacher, made films, wrote poetry.

In 1962, he created 35 sculptures and exhibited them in Ceadîr-Lunga. People praised them, but he stood beside them and saw every flaw – where a hand was placed wrong, where a face was not expressive enough. His attitude toward his work was so demanding that one day he took a sledgehammer and smashed many of his own works right in the yard.

Neighbors: "Have you gone mad? So much time wasted!" And he said: "Not good enough. I can do better."

In 1966, he opened the world's first Gagauz ethnographic museum in Beşalma. For him, "almost good" did not exist. Either it is good, or you start over.

When I was Governor, I could not do my work carelessly, either. I could not sign a document that had something wrong with it. I could not stay silent when I saw injustice. They called me stubborn, but I simply do not know how to be otherwise. Because the steppe does not forgive laziness. And a Gagauz does not forgive himself if some work is unfinished.

Third, keep your word.

We have a proverb: "If you take something, do not forget to give it back." It means that a promise is sacred for a Gagauz. If you give your word, you will keep it to the end.

In the late 1980s, the Gagauz realised: if we do not defend ourselves now, we will be dissolved. Moldova was moving toward unification with Romania, the Gagauz language was to be banned, our villages were to disappear.

On August 19, 1990, the Gagauz Republic was proclaimed.

The Moldovan authorities sent convoys of volunteers to Comrat to crush the popular movement by force. Stepan Topal and Mihail Kendighelean led the resistance and defended the rights of the Gagauz people for four years. In 1994, they secured autonomy for Gagauzia. They gave their word to the people and kept it to the end.

Thank you

I want to say thank you. Thank you for coming out to rally for me.

After my arrest, gatherings took place in every inhabited locality of Gagauzia. In April, more than 5,000 people came to a rally in Comrat. In August, thousands of people gathered at the prison walls and demanded my release. You stood ground in any weather, held posters, you were not afraid.



Thank you for the letters that come every day. From a grandmother in Congaz: "Hold on, daughter, we are with you." From a young man in Ceadâr-Lunga: "You are our true Governor!" From a mother in Comrat: "My children pray for you."

Thank you for passing words of support to my family: to my mother, my sister, my husband, my children. For them, this is more important than any psychological help.

I know that I am not alone.

Bân gagauzkayım. I am Gagauz.

And these sacred words we must pass on to our children, so that they remember: we survived in the empty steppe. We won autonomy. We will endure now as well.

*With love for our people,
Evghenia Gutul*

Letter to Maia Sandu

Maia Sandu — President of the Republic of Moldova (since 2020).

She graduated from the Kennedy School of Government at Harvard University.

She worked as an adviser to the Executive Director of the World Bank in Washington. She holds both Romanian and Moldovan citizenship.

In 2020, she became President of Moldova.

In 2024, she was re-elected for a second term thanks to the votes of the diaspora (the majority of voters inside the country voted against her).

Under Sandu, Moldova's economy plunged into crisis: inflation reached 34% per year, GDP fell by 6%, and external debt approached 60% of GDP. More than 20 TV channels and radio stations were shut down, and opposition parties were not allowed to participate in elections.

She is not married and has no children.

Ms. Sandu, how do you sleep at night?

I sleep on a hard prison bed in a cell of Prison No. 13 — a prison that has been internationally recognised as having inhumane conditions. It is damp and mouldy; cockroaches and mice run around at night. From the window, I cannot see the sky — only a concrete wall with barbed wire and a guard tower.

I wake up several times each night, because sometimes I hear the mice. But my conscience is clear.

I know that you sleep in your apartment — the one you love to show off in interviews. An ordinary building, an ordinary apartment, no luxury. You carefully cultivate the image of a simple person: you go hiking with walking sticks, you tell stories about how you take care of your elderly mother, you demonstrate that your whole life is only work and concern for the country. Just a modest woman who serves the people.

But we know what goes on behind the facade of this ostentatious modesty. You have vices far worse than palaces and limousines: a thirst for power and a panic-stricken fear of disappointing your Western handlers. That is what drives you.

A modest apartment does not make you an honest person when you trade away the interests of the country. Hiking with sticks does not make you a people's leader when you imprison those whom the people have elected. Simplicity in daily life is just good PR and a set decoration that cannot hide what you are doing to your country.

So I ask you: when you return to that ordinary apartment of yours, when you lie down to sleep in an ordinary bed, when you close your eyes — what do you see?

Do you see the faces of those you have imprisoned because they disagreed with you? Do you hear the voices of those whose lives your decisions have broken?

You have learned to switch off your conscience like a light bulb. In the morning you sign a sentence against a leader elected by the people, and in the evening you smile into the cameras and recite memorised words about democracy. Once again you play the role of the modest president who cares about the good of the country.

I have a lot of time to think here. And I try to understand: what happened to you? How did you reach this point?

I am sure that when you started, you had ideals. You probably dreamed of a better Moldova, sincerely believed in change. Perhaps you really wanted to help your country.

But then came Harvard, the World Bank, Washington – and, of course, behind all of this stood George Soros and his entities, whose goal was to interfere in the politics of other countries through "students" like you. And that is already a proven fact.

Only all these facts are carefully hushed up, as if nothing had happened.

Western institutions groomed you as a project for decades: the right education, the right connections, the right words. You were taught to say what is needed, to do what is needed, to smile when needed, to sign what is needed. They turned you into a perfect instrument.

Soon you even stopped hiding the fact that you serve not Moldova, but the West. Somewhere between Chisinau and Washington, you lost the girl who once wanted to change the world for the better.

Now you have become a prisoner of those who dictate your every move. You are not a dictator – you are just a woman who has lost control of her own life and now carries out other people's orders. You do what you are told because you are afraid of disappointing your handlers. Afraid that without the president's chair you will be nobody.

Because power is the only thing you have. And you cling to it.

You know what amazes me? How can you make decisions about Moldova's fate when you have no anchor?

My roots are Gagauzia. When I make a decision, I see in front of me specific faces – the faces of my children, of old people sitting on benches, of families around the dinner table. I lean on the past of my people and think about their future.

Your past, on the other hand, is Harvard and the World Bank, and your future is Romania – a place you can always move to.

For you, people are just numbers in reports for your Western handlers. You do not see the real faces behind your decisions. When you sign a sentence, you do not think about the children left without a mother. When you eliminate positions for Gagauz language teachers, you do not see the faces of specific grandmothers who will no longer be able to speak to their grandchildren in their native language.

You love to talk about European values. You speak of democracy, the rule of law, freedom of speech, human rights. Beautiful words you were taught at Harvard.

But tell me, Ms. Sandu: is European democracy about imprisoning elected leaders because they disagree with you? Is it about depriving people of the right to choose their representatives? Is it about persecuting the opposition and calling it a fight against corruption?

Today, democracy in Moldova has been put up against the wall and executed on someone else's orders, which you carried out meekly, like an obedient schoolgirl.

Your handlers applaud you. They call you a "defender of democracy," a "fighter against corruption," a "driver of European reforms." They give you awards, invite you to forums, quote you in their reports. In short, for them you are a model puppet, doing what is needed and saying what is needed.

Do you know how this will end?

In three years, your mandate will end. And that's it. You

will become nobody — neither needed by your handlers nor by your own party members. Your own party has already started a quiet scramble for power, whispers in the corridors about who will be next. You are already being written off, and you haven't even left yet. This is what you are afraid of, which is why you grovel so desperately, imprisoning people, strangling the opposition, betraying the country. Anything to make sure you stay useful as long as possible: I am needed, don't throw me away.

I am behind bars, but my conscience is clean. I know what awaits me when I get out: my children, my people, my land.

But what awaits you? You sold your country for power that will end anyway. You betrayed your people as you sought the approval of those who will discard you without regret when you stop being useful. You betrayed yourself to serve foreign interests.

And when this happens, you will be left completely alone. No family to meet you. No children to say: "Mom, we are proud of you." Even the people of Moldova will hate you, because you sold them for foreign approval.

You know what? I honestly feel sorry for you. Not as a political opponent, but as a person.

You understood that you fell into a trap, but it is already too late to get out.

History will judge us both. In twenty years, textbooks will write: "Maia Sandu — the president who imprisoned elected leaders, banned opposition parties, and blocked dozens of TV channels. Under her, inflation reached 34%, people became rapidly impoverished and fled the country, and democracy died under beautiful speeches about European values." You want to go down in history as a reformer and a lobbyist for the path towards

Europe. But your actual legacy will be a woman who made her nation poor and sold it down the river out of fear of being nobody.

When I close my eyes in this cell, my conscience is clean. And when you close your eyes, is yours?

Evghenia Gutul
Elected Governor of Gagauzia

Letter to My Husband, Artyom

When we met, I had already been living with Dan for many years. His father left us when Dan was 10 months old, and I was 23. He left for another woman and sent us 50 euros in alimony a month, which was barely enough for diapers. He even said: "Be glad I pay even that much." I was alone, without a job, in a rented apartment with an infant.

Then there were two years of court battles. He threw a spanner in the works, we kept bickering at the child protection agency. They kept telling me: "No one will want a woman with a child. If anyone falls in love with you, they definitely won't love your child."

I won all the courts, but after that, I stopped trusting men. I lived alone for ten years, raising my son. I decided I would dedicate my life to work and helping people.

And then you appeared...

First, that insignificant meeting I forgot about.

Six months later, you added me as a friend on social media. I didn't even realize who it was or where I knew you from. I couldn't have guessed that God had other plans for us.

You were so warm that I wanted to talk to you more and more. I started waiting for our messages and calls.

Then the pandemic began, a difficult time for everyone. The whole world was put on hold, but for us, that time became special. When they allowed walks outside, you invited me on our first date to the park. You waited for me after work.

The Republican Stadium, near where you met me, became our favourite spot. Ironically, the prison where I am now is also located near the Republican Stadium, literally 300–500 metres away.

Honey,

It's late evening, and everyone is already asleep. I am sitting in my cell looking at our photographs. I remember how we watched the sunrise at the sea, how we walked in the park, how Mark learned to walk while you held his hands.

I remember how a mutual friend introduced us. We met by chance, chatted a bit. I thought: "Huh, nothing special." And each of us went our separate ways...

A few years later, that same guy I thought was "nothing special" turned out to be the man without whom I cannot imagine my life.

...I fell in love immediately. I don't know at what moment it happened, maybe when you laughed at my joke, maybe when you supported me after a hard day. Just at some point, I realised: I needed you.

We walked in the park every day after my work. Sometimes you would just wait for me on our bench, and I would already see your figure from afar and quicken my pace. We walked along the alleys, talked about everything, laughed. I didn't notice how my heart began to thaw.

...It was early May. I remember it as if it were today: it got warm, it already smelled like spring, the sun was out to pamper us. We were sitting on our bench, when suddenly you leaned over and kissed me. So gently, as if it was the most precious moment in your life.

At that moment, I realised: ten years of loneliness were over. I was no longer alone.

I had heard for so long that no one would love a woman with a child, that no one loves other people's children. But you loved Dan as your own. You two became friends; you support him, pamper him, spend time with him. He is not your biological son, but to him, you are his real father.

We got married. We really wanted a baby, but I couldn't get pregnant for a long time.

I remember the day I took the test and saw two lines. I came out of the bathroom and handed you the test. You looked at those two lines and started jumping with joy. Jumping! You were so happy that I couldn't hold back my tears.

You were there with me my entire pregnancy. You indulged my whims, made sure I didn't worry about anything. When Mark

was born, we took turns staying up at night when he had colic. It is you who bathe Mark. And you do it with such love, as if it's the most important thing in the world.

When the election campaign began, you gave up everything for me and our family. I went to Gagauzia for two months. Every day from morning to evening, meetings with people, talks about programmes. Mark wasn't even one year old yet; he didn't walk yet, and he would wake up at night. Mom was over seventy; it was hard for her alone. You stayed with them. You stopped your life so I could go towards my goal.

After my victory in the election for the Governor of Gagauzia, you quit one of your jobs to devote more time to the family.

I worked from morning till night, often without days off, returning home only for dinner — it was the only time we could be together. You became the foundation on which our whole life stood.

When the arrests and trials began, when the whole world around me turned into a nightmare, you were my quiet haven. I would come home broken, scared, with my nerves at the limit. And you would hug me. I could just lie on your chest, close my eyes, and for a second the whole world would calm down.

You never revealed your fear. I know you were worried just like me. But you wanted to protect me.

August 5, 2025 is a black day for all of us. We went to the courthouse as a family. Mark held our hands and jumped with joy, because Mom was finally out for a walk with him (after months of house arrest).

He didn't know that in a few minutes, everything would change.

Before entering the hall, the secretary said that children were not allowed. You took Mark's hand and said: "Kiss Mom." He kissed me on the cheek, you took a photo. This photo is always with me now; I look at it every night before I go to sleep. I named it "Mark's Last Kiss."

I entered the courtroom. You stayed waiting in the hallway with the children.

And I never came out.



I often remember those happy moments now and compare them to what I have now.

I remember how we went to the sea and were happy. I stood by the water and watched the waves; you hugged me from behind.

The sea is my element — I can look at it forever. For me, it is a true pleasure to wake up to the sound of the surf.

Now I am sitting in a prison cell. It is damp and mouldy; cockroaches and mice run around at night. Recently a beetle crawled into my cell. Huge, the size of my thumb.

I had never seen such a beetle, even in the village. I was very frightened, but then I thought: "Artyom would have caught it and let it out." You always did that — you never killed anything alive. And I felt so sad at that thought that you are not here even for such small things.

I often remember our family dinners. How Harvey was always the first to run to the door when someone came home. How, according to our tradition, we would wake the birthday person in the morning with a little cake and a candle. Before, we saw each other every day. We would come home, have dinner together, fall asleep next to each other. It was so natural that I never thought about how precious it was.

Now I can count on my fingers how many times we have seen each other during my entire time here. A few short visits through a glass partition over a telephone. One hour a month in a narrow booth. It is terrible — to see your loved ones but not be able to hug them.

And one long visit. Twelve hours in a small room. The door is locked for the entire time; you cannot leave. The room is cramped, but for us those twelve hours are like a whole world. I can put my head on your chest and feel your heart beating. And feel at home again.

I calculated: if I serve the full sentence, during those seven years we will be given 28 such visits. That is 336 hours. 14 days.

Two weeks in seven years of separation.

I used to have the habit of spinning my wedding ring on my finger with the thumb of my right hand. Here, gold is forbidden; the ring was taken away. But the habit remains — I still spin an imaginary ring, and every time I think of you.

Now you are holding everything together alone: two children, an elderly mother. Mark wakes up at night, cries, wanders through the rooms looking for me. Daniil sees how worried you are, how you try to stay strong for their sake.

You don't talk about how hard it is for you, but I know you get tired. I know you fall asleep alone in our bed and think about when this will end.

When I was brought to prison, I was allowed to make one phone call — and I dialed your number. You answered: "Zhenya, don't give up, we will fight, you are strong. We and the team are with you." You say that every time we talk on the phone.

You always repeat that everything will be fine. And I believe you, because in five years I have never seen you give up.

You know, you have always been more romantic than me — it's so sweet. I don't remember if we have "our song" or that special moment that belongs only to us, but you probably remember, because that's just who you are.

You remember the details I forget: how you hugged me when we first met and lifted me slightly off the ground; you even remember what I wore on our dates.

We are complete opposites: I am fire, you are water. I am

hot-tempered and emotional, like all Gagauz, while you are so calm that sometimes I think you must have some kind of superpower.

I promise you that I will get out of here. We will go to the seaside again, watch the sunrise on the shore. We will decorate the Christmas tree in December for New Year's, and Harvey will run to the door first again when someone comes home.

Do you remember how you always wanted another child, and I refused, saying two was enough, that there wasn't enough time? Here, I made a promise to myself: when I get out, I definitely want to have a girl for you... Our little daughter, the one you dreamed of.

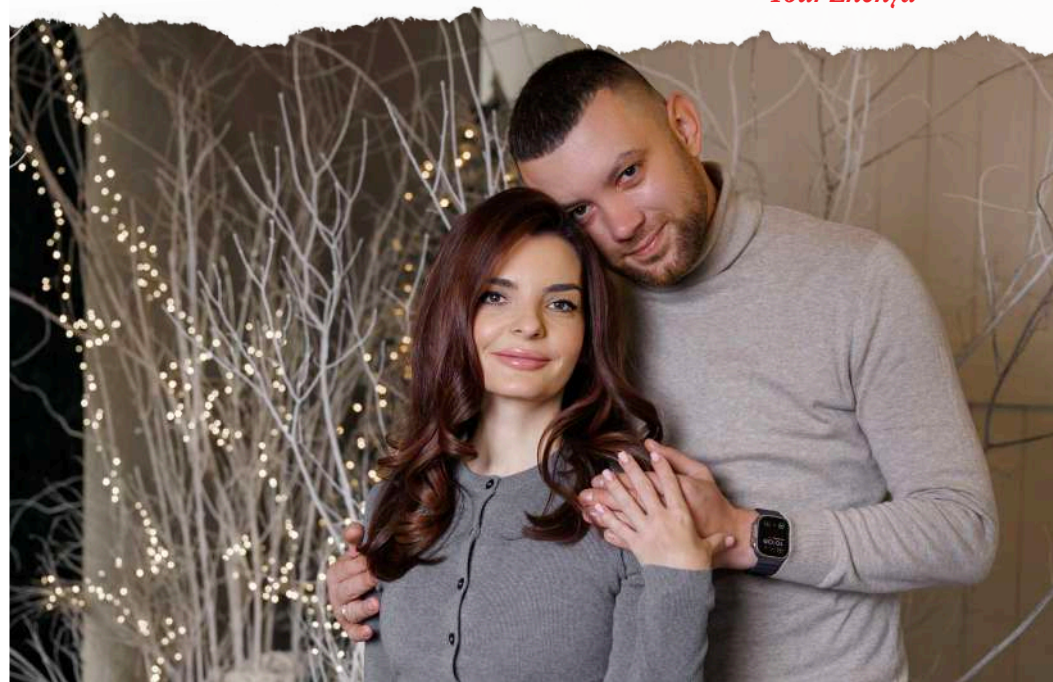
Thank you for being there. You have always been and will always be, even when I am not.

I want to thank your mom and grandmother for bringing up such a man.

I want to thank God that He led you to me.

Wait for me, Artyom, I will return.

Your Zhenya



Letter to my lawyers

For the record. For the court. For the truth

Dear lawyers,

I am writing this letter not for the Moldovan judges – they will not listen to me anyway, as everything has already been decided in advance. I am writing for those who will read this later in international courts and organisations.

I want to record everything that has happened to me during this criminal prosecution to tell the story not as a politician, but as a human being, of what really happened.

First, I will explain that two separate criminal cases have been brought against me. Both of these cases are being used to put pressure on me, and it is important to understand the difference between them.

CASE No. 1 concerning the illegal financing of the Shor party between 2019 and 2022. It was initiated in January 2022. It was this case that sentenced me to seven years in prison, and it is this case that is currently under appeal.

CASE No. 2 concerning the illegal financing of my election campaign in the 2023 governor elections. It was opened in January 2024, but I was not informed of this. I only found out about the existence of this case when I was detained at the airport on 25 March 2025 — it was on this basis that I was arrested at the time. To date, no action has been taken in this case; it is literally ‘dead’.

TIMELINE OF POLITICAL PERSECUTION

January 2022. CASE NO. 1: Initiating the first case

In January 2022, criminal case No. 1 was brought against me. I was accused of allegedly systematically bringing money from Russia into Moldova between 2019 and 2022 to finance the Shor party.

My home was searched. They seized personal belongings, documents and electronic devices. They found nothing. After the searches, the case went quiet. It was shelved.

May 2023. The Gagauzia Governor Election

On 14 May 2023, I won the Gagauzia Governor election. I was supported by 52.34% of the voters. I became the voice of the people of Gagauzia.

Chisinau was in shock. They hadn’t expected the people to choose me — an inconvenient politician who wouldn’t bow down to them.

July 2023. I was offered a shameful deal

After I became Governor, I was offered a shameful deal: ‘Give up your mandate as Governor, and the case will be closed.’ The offer came from the then head of Moldova’s Anti-Corruption Prosecutor’s Office, Veronika Dragalin, who was acting on Sandu’s instructions.

I refused, as I could not betray the trust of those who had supported me.

It was precisely after this that criminal case No. 1, which had been at a standstill since January 2022, suddenly came to life. It was pulled out of the archives and began to be actively pursued.

January 2024. CASE No. 2: Initiation the second case

In January 2024, a second criminal case was brought against me: concerning the alleged illegal financing of my election campaign in the 2023 Governor election.

At the time, I knew nothing about it. I was simply living my normal life, working, meeting people, and tackling Gagauzia’s problems. My typical day back then was full of meetings, gatherings with villagers, sorting out issues with roads and hospitals. I remember how children in one of the villages gave me drawings after the renovation of the nursery. One boy drew me with a smile and wrote: ‘Thank you’.

And somewhere in the offices of Chisinau, a second case was already being opened against me.

6 March 2024. Meeting with Vladimir Putin

In early March, I was in Sochi at the World Youth Festival. Attended by 185 countries, the festival was held at an educational centre. I stood on the promenade, looked out at the sea and

thought about the upcoming meeting.

On 6 March, I had a meeting scheduled with Russian President Vladimir Putin. We needed help: Chisinau had cut our budget, stripped us of our powers and was putting pressure on our autonomy. It was important for me to speak about this directly.

I was nervous the morning before the meeting. I hadn't slept properly the night before, in my head going over what I was going to say. The meeting was constructive. I explained how the central government was stifling our autonomy, how we lacked funds for schools and hospitals, and how our legal rights were being ignored.

Vladimir Putin listened attentively and asked questions. This meeting yielded results: together with Russia, we launched aid programmes for the people of Gagauzia. This was important to the people.

I realised that after this, Chisinau would not forgive me. For the Sandu regime, any contact with Moscow is a death sentence. I knew I would have to pay for this. But I didn't think the price would be so high.

8 March 2024. Provocation at the airport

Two days after the meeting with Vladimir Putin, I returned to Chisinau. I approached passport control and immediately sensed that something was wrong.

The airport was swarming with police. I'd never seen so many in one place: they were everywhere and staring straight at me. Why so many armed men against a single woman? What do they expect, that I'll start fighting or try to run away? I have no weapons, I don't know any martial arts. Just a woman with a suitcase and a travel bag.

I was stopped at customs; they asked for my passport and told me to wait. I sat down on a chair. The customs officers were

clearly nervous, constantly making phone calls and whispering to one another. Someone would go into the office, then come back and make another call. It was obvious: they were waiting for instructions from above.

Twenty minutes passed, maybe more. One of the customs officers approached me and asked if I'd like a coffee. I nodded automatically, and he held out a plastic cup.

I looked at him, then at the cup in his hand. I'd just been detained without explanation, and now suddenly they were offering me coffee? After my meeting with Putin, when the whole airport was swarming with police?

I took the cup and thanked him, but didn't drink it.

I simply didn't want to take any chances.

Another forty minutes passed. Finally, the customs officers came out of the office. They silently returned my passport and made an indifferent gesture with their hands: 'You may go.'

Apparently, they were getting ready for another scenario, but someone from the leadership took a last-minute decision that arresting me at the moment was very dangerous.

When I exited the airport building, I saw a huge crowd. Thousands of people came to greet me. Some were holding flowers, some said: "Happy Women's Day". People shouted words of support and hugged me.



I realised straight away why they hadn't arrested me. They didn't dare do it with so many witnesses around. How could they explain to all those people: 'We've arrested your leader for asking for help on your behalf'?

It became clear then: this was only the beginning. The regime is simply biding its time, waiting for a more opportune moment.



April 2024.

CASE No. 1 is referred to court

At the end of April, an envelope arrived containing a summons for CASE No. 1: Buiucani District Court. First hearing in the criminal case on 30 April 2024'.

This happened immediately after my meeting with Vladimir Putin. A coincidence? Of course not.

The case, which had been 'dead' for two years, suddenly became urgent. It was pulled from the archives and immediately sent to court.

I rang my lawyer, and he explained the nature of the charges. The Anti-Corruption Prosecutor's Office claims that from 2019 to 2022 I allegedly systematically brought money into Moldova to finance the Shor party. I allegedly knowingly received more than 42.5 million lei (2 million 125 thousand euros) from an 'organised criminal group'.

I listened and didn't understand: what on earth were they talking about? What money?

On 30 April, I attended the first court hearing at the Buiucani Court in central Chisinau. Judge Anna Cucerescu presided over the proceedings. Prosecutors Gennady Epure and Cristina Gladkov read out the indictment. They cited figures, dates and the names of people I had never seen. They listed various financial transactions to which I had no connection.

I sat in the courtroom and waited to see what evidence the prosecutors would produce to prove my guilt. Perhaps documents bearing my signature, bank transfers involving me, witnesses who had seen me handing over or receiving money? Anything concrete. But there was none of that. Just the prosecutors' words and their assumptions. Not a single piece of real evidence.

The legal marathon in CASE No. 1

April 2024 – March 2025

From April 2024 to March 2025, I was dragged to court hearings two to four times a week. The judge drew up hearing schedules months in advance. For example, 26 hearings were scheduled from January to March 2025. That meant appearing in court 26 times in two months. This was done deliberately: to wear me down and prevent me from working.

I'd wake up in the morning and my first thought was: court again. I'd gather my documents and sit in a stuffy courtroom for several hours. Then I'd return home by evening, tired and

exhausted. At home, my son would ask: ‘Mum, why did you go away again?’ I’d smile: ‘Work, sweetheart.’

The case file comprised 69 volumes. There was not a single piece of real evidence of my guilt in those volumes. The prosecutors read out the statements of witnesses who had never seen me. People admitted right there in the courtroom: ‘I only know Evghenia Gutul from television; I have never met her in person.’

How can such a person testify against me? But the judge accepted these statements as evidence.

My lawyers filed motions. Every single one was rejected. I looked at the judge and realised: she already knows what sentence she will hand down.



25 October 2024.

Elections and a referendum

Amidst a marathon of court cases, Moldova held presidential elections and a referendum on European integration.

Gagauzia voted as one: 94.84% against EU accession, with only 2.26% in favour of Maia Sandu. It was a verdict on the regime. The people showed that they did not support Chisinau’s policies.

After the elections, the pressure on me increased exponentially. Court hearings became even more frequent, the prosecutors more aggressive, and the judge dismissed the defence’s motions even more swiftly.

The regime saw these figures as a threat. I was the voice of these people, a symbol of resistance. And that voice had to be silenced at any cost.

25 March 2025.

Arrest at the airport in connection with CASE No. 2

By March 2025, the gruelling trial in CASE No. 1 had been going on for almost a year. The judge had drawn up a schedule of hearings for the next two months, and I spotted a few free days.

I had an invitation to Istanbul for an event organised by the Global Union of Journalists. I bought return tickets. I had no intention of running away. I have my children here, Gagauzia, my people. Where would I run to?

On the evening of 25 March, I arrived at Chisinau Airport. I checked in for my flight without any problems. At passport control, an officer took my passport, looked at the computer and asked me to wait.

More than two hours passed. The border guards were getting nervous, constantly making calls and whispering amongst themselves. The plane was due to take off soon. I asked when they would let me through, but they just shrugged their shoulders.

I thought they would simply send me back home, but then I saw a large group of people approaching me — plainclothes officers and special forces. There were a great many of them. They came

up and said: 'You are under arrest.' I phoned my lawyer straight away, then received the arrest warrant.

And here is the most shocking thing I learnt from that document: I was arrested under CASE No. 2 — concerning the illegal financing of my election campaign in the 2023 Governor elections.

This case was opened in January 2024, over a year ago. I wasn't even informed of its existence. I wasn't subject to any travel restrictions either. I travelled abroad without any issues, attended events, and met with officials.

The formal reason for the arrest: 'risk of flight'.

Absurd! I could have left hundreds of times over the past year. I had no restrictions whatsoever. But they arrested me at precisely this moment, when the trial in CASE No. 1 was drawing to a close.

I was told: 72 hours' detention. The first thing I thought of was Daniil and Mark. Not seeing my children for three days, not hearing their voices, is torture for me. I was worried about my mum; I was afraid her blood pressure would rise. And that's exactly what happened: Mum felt unwell when she saw the news on TV. We had to call an ambulance.

When they were leading me out of the airport, there were lots of people on the street. My supporters, residents of Gagauzia. They were shouting words of support.

They took me to the Anti-Corruption Centre through the back entrance, as there were too many people at the main entrance. I could hardly see them, but I could hear their voices. At that moment, I realised: I am not alone.

28 March 2025. A prison sentence

Three days after my arrest, the court ruled that I should be sent to Penitentiary No. 13. This prison is notorious for its harsh conditions and is recognised as inhumane by international standards.

Reason given: 'a threat to society'.

When I heard those words, I couldn't believe it. A threat to society? Such measures are applied to socially dangerous individuals: murderers, rapists, terrorists, serial killers. To those who have committed serious violent crimes and may repeat them if released.

Now look at me. I am the Governor of Gagauzia, elected by the people. A mother of two children. My father died a year ago; my mother, who suffers from high blood pressure, is waiting for me at home. Every day I meet ordinary people — teachers, pensioners, workers.

From April 2024 to March 2025, I attended every court hearing in CASE No. 1 without fail. I appeared at the Buiucani court two to four times a week. I never missed a single one. I never once tried to hide. I was not subject to any travel restrictions. 329 days have passed: if I had wanted to, I had 329 days to flee.

I am accused of financing an election campaign. Not of murder. Not of violence.

What threat do I pose to society? From whom do I need to be isolated? From the voters who voted for me? From witnesses who have never even seen me?

Or does the court think I will run away? Abandon two children, one of whom is three years old. Abandon the people who elected me?

No. The court decided that I pose just as much of a threat

as terrorists and murderers, and that I should be locked away in a prison with inhumane conditions.

Because otherwise, I will continue to defend the interests of Gagauzia and criticise the Sandu regime. That is what my real ‘threat’ consists of.



Late March 2025. Gagauzia rose up in defence

Whilst I was sitting in a solitary cell in Prison No. 13, something was happening behind the prison walls that the Sandu regime had not anticipated.

Gagauzia had risen up. Mass public rallies took place in dozens of towns and villages across the autonomous region! Everywhere, the demand was the same: ‘Freedom for the Governor!’

Local authorities and ordinary residents took to the streets. Young people and the elderly. Mothers with children and veterans. People carried Gagauz flags and posters: ‘Hands off Gagauzia!’, ‘Chisinau, stop putting pressure on Gagauzia!’, ‘Gagauzia is not

a colony of Chisinau!”, ‘Gagauzia is proud of Evghenia Gutul!’, ‘Zhenya, we are with you!’.

People were saying one thing: this is not the arrest of a single person — it is the arrest of the whole of Gagauzia.

On 26 March, the Executive Committee of Gagauzia issued an official statement demanding an immediate end to the pressure and my release. The People’s Assembly of Gagauzia was even more forceful: it demanded an independent international investigation involving the OSCE, the Council of Europe, Turkey and Russia. It demanded an end to discrimination against Gagauzia and the resignation of the prosecutors.

On 27 March, a rally in my support took place in Moscow outside the Moldovan embassy. Representatives of the Moldovan and Gagauz diasporas came out demanding my release. Activists unfurled a 20-metre-long banner featuring the flag of Gagauzia. Gagauz music played, people sang the anthem of the autonomous region and chanted: ‘We stand with Gutul!’ The posters read: ‘Evghenia Gutul is a prisoner of conscience’, ‘No to repression!’, ‘Evghenia, Russia is with you!’, ‘Gagauzia has been arrested, democracy has been abolished’, ‘Repression is Sandu’s style’, ‘Down with dictatorship!’.

On 30 March, my supporters gathered outside the walls of Penitentiary No. 13, where I was being held. They stood there all day with their posters, despite the police taking down their details in an attempt to intimidate them.

When my lawyers told me all this, I burst into tears. But these were not tears of despair — they were tears of pride. The regime thought that my arrest would break Gagauzia. The opposite happened. My arrest united the people.

During those days, sitting in my cell, I realised the most important thing: as long as my people stand behind me, I cannot be broken.

9 April 2025. House arrest

After two weeks in prison, I was transferred to house arrest. Thanks to mass protests, international attention, and statements from Russia and Turkey, the court changed my pre-trial detention order.

When my lawyer told me the news, I felt a sense of relief. At last I would be able to see my children, hug them, and be with them. I left prison and the first thing I did was ring home. I heard Daniil's voice: 'Mum, are you coming?' I replied: 'Yes, sweetheart, I'm on my way to you.'

House arrest meant I could not leave the house without permission or communicate with the outside world. Sitting at home, I drew up a development strategy for Gagauzia in every area — healthcare, education, the development and preservation of the Gagauz language, agriculture, the social and economic areas, sport and culture, and so on.

I wrote an appeal to the people: 'I am deeply grateful to everyone who did not remain indifferent. To those who took part in peaceful protests, who signed petitions in my defence, who stood up for my honour and dignity. We have shown the whole country: the Gagauz are a people of dignity, a people who know how to fight, a people who do not betray their own.'

We have proven that we cannot be broken. And I was ready to continue the fight.

16 April 2025. A large-scale rally in Comrat

A week after my release from prison, a large-scale rally took place in Comrat. More than 5,000 people turned out: residents of Gagauzia, members of the People's Assembly, members of the Executive Committee, autonomy campaign veterans, public

figures, and representatives of the Victory bloc.

The people had four demands:

1. To revoke all unconstitutional decisions that curtailed Gagauzia's powers.
2. To guarantee that the central government would cease interfering in the affairs of the autonomy.
3. To distribute budget funds fairly (Chisinau has stolen a quarter of our budget revenue).
4. My immediate acquittal on all charges.

The rally's resolution was sent to all international organisations, diplomatic consulates and missions.

I represented all those gathered and understood that I had no right to give up.



Early July 2025.

Final statement and a nine-year sentence

The trial in CASE No. 1 had been going on for over a year. Hearing after hearing, witness after witness for the prosecution, volume after volume. Sixty-nine volumes of case files containing not a single piece of real evidence of my guilt.

In early July 2025, I was given the final word. I addressed the court.

The closing arguments began at that point. The prosecutor stood up and uttered a figure that sent a chill down my spine: nine years' imprisonment. Confiscation of property. Plus a five-year ban on holding public office.

I sat there and couldn't believe it. Nine years. You don't get that kind of sentence for financial offences. That's the sentence for murderers, for people who have committed serious violent crimes.

They didn't have a single document bearing my signature, not a single bank transfer involving me, not a single real witness, yet they were demanding the maximum sentence.

It was during this hearing that I revealed to the court the details of a deal that had been offered to me after one of the interrogations: to give up my mandate as Governor in exchange for the case being dropped. But I didn't accept that deal, and that is precisely why they are persecuting me.

5 August 2025.

A political sentence

This is a dark day in the calendar for my family and for Gagauzia. The whole family was there that day. We got into the car. We were immediately surrounded by eight or nine police cars. I was escorted as if I were a particularly dangerous criminal.

When we arrived at the courthouse, we saw a huge crowd of people who had come to support me. I smiled at them, but the smile on my face was merely a mask: inside, everything had died; I literally couldn't feel my body because of the fear.

We walked to the courthouse together with my family. Mark took me and Dad by the hand; he was so happy, jumping with joy. At last, Mum had come out onto the street with him! He was so pleased to be able to go for a walk with his parents. He didn't know that in a few minutes he would never see Mum again and might not hold her hand for a very long time.....After a while, the judge read out the sentence. She read it in a trembling voice, stumbling over her words as if she were seeing the text for the first time: 'Seven years' imprisonment in a general regime penal colony. Confiscation of property.'

Mum and my sister were sitting a metre away from me. The guards stood up. They wouldn't let me hug Mum and my sister, wouldn't let me say my final words. I only managed to turn round. Mum was holding herself together: her back was straight, her head held high. But her eyes... There was such pain in her eyes.

I whispered: "I love you." And I made a heart shape with my fingers. That was all I managed to do.

I was told that someone had posted a video on social media showing us entering the courthouse with my husband and children, and then Artyom coming out alone with Mark.



To this day, my family cannot come to terms with this verdict. It is a blow from which it is impossible to recover. I was led away through another door. When I imagine what my family must have felt at that moment, I am overcome with tears.

10 August 2025.

Thousands of people outside the prison walls

Five days after the verdict, thousands of people gathered outside Penitentiary No. 13. Thousands of people from Gagauzia (and beyond) had travelled to Chisinau with a single demand: 'Free Baskan!'

I was sitting in my cell and could hear the noise from outside. I couldn't make out the words, but I could hear the hum of voices and chanting. The guards were nervous, pacing the corridor, discussing something.

Later, my lawyer told me that there were thousands of people there. It was one of the largest protests in Moldova in recent times.

Even whilst in prison, my voice rang out louder than anyone else's.



5 September 2025.

A birthday in a cell

It was my birthday. I turned 39, and I spent it in a solitary confinement cell: four walls, a bunk bed.

No guests, no children's hugs, no flowers and no calls from loved ones. I lay on the hard bunk and thought back to past birthdays: how we used to celebrate as a whole family, how the children helped me blow out the candles on the cake.

I remembered our last family holiday by the sea. We were so happy back then and believed that 2025 would bring us new heights and victories; we made plans and dreamed of the future.

I remember standing by the water and watching the waves. I've always loved the sea: I can watch the waves roll onto the shore for hours; I love falling asleep and waking up to the sound of them. By the water, I always felt truly free.

And now, instead of the sea, I have concrete walls; instead of the sound of the waves, the footsteps of a guard in the corridor and the clang of iron doors.

As I drifted off to sleep, I thought: yes, I spent my birthday alone, but I am not lonely. My people stand behind me, and that is stronger than any prison walls.

The Farce of the Legal Proceedings: Appeal and Exposure

On 9 October 2025, the Court of Appeal began hearing my case, CASE No. 1. What unfolded during the hearings was beyond belief: on one particular day, they were supposed to review part of the case file—28 volumes. And they examined 28 volumes in one hour! One.

How is that even possible? Even if the judge were to read without a break, without blinking, it is physically impossible. Imagine: you arrive at the hospital with a serious diagnosis, the

doctor looks at you for one minute and says: 'You need a heart transplant'. You ask: "Doctor, have you looked at my test results? There are 500 pages of results." The doctor replies: "Yes, I looked at them all in a minute. The operation is tomorrow."

That is what happened to me in court. It is an admission that the judge did not even pretend to read the case files. The verdict was ready before the trial began. And the hearing was merely a formality to rubber-stamp a decision that had been written in advance.

Letters to world leaders

From my prison cell, I wrote letters to world leaders. I wrote them on paper and had them passed on via my lawyers. I didn't know if they would reach their recipients, but I had to try.

I wrote to Russian President Vladimir Putin, stating that this was an open attack on Gagauzia. Chisinau is suppressing dissent and persecuting those who advocate fraternal relations with Russia. I asked for diplomatic and political pressure to be brought to bear on the Sandu regime, and for support for Gagauzia's special status.

I wrote to Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, noting that 30 years ago Turkey helped achieve a historic compromise. Gagauzia and Moldova avoided war thanks to Ankara. Now Chisinau is trampling on the 1994 agreements and persecuting those who advocate friendship with Turkey.

I sent a letter to US President Donald Trump stating that Gagauzia is facing unprecedented pressure, and that the EU is effectively encouraging these illegal actions. I requested moral and political support.

I wrote to US Vice President J.D. Vance that the law has been turned into a weapon. "This is the beginning of the end of justice." I requested a political assessment of the violations.

I wrote to UN Secretary-General António Guterres that 30 years ago, the Gagauz people were guaranteed political rights. This agreement became a model for the world. An attempt is now underway to deprive Gagauzia of its legally elected leadership. I asked the UN to stand up for the right to self-government.

Conclusion: facts and figures

So, here are the final dates and figures to clearly illustrate the absurdity of the situation.

January 2022. CASE No. 1 is opened

May 2023. Victory in the Governor election

July 2023. A deal is proposed: hand over my mandate in exchange for the case being closed. My refusal. CASE No. 1 'comes back to life'

January 2024. Возбуждение ДЕЛА № 2. О нем мне не сообщили

6 March 2024. Meeting with Russian President Vladimir Putin

8 March 2024. Provocation at the airport (they planned to arrest me)

April 2024. CASE No. 1 is referred to court (following the meeting with Putin)

30 April 2024. First court hearing in CASE No. 1

October 2024. Referendum. 94.84% of Gagauzia's residents vote against European integration; only 2.26% vote for Maia Sandu

25 March 2025. Arrest at the airport (the formal pretext is CASE No. 2). The Anti-Corruption Prosecutor's Office has concluded the presentation of evidence in CASE No. 1

28 March 2025. Imprisonment in connection with CASE No. 2. People took to the streets

9 April 2025. House arrest

5 August 2025. Sentence in CASE No. 1

9 October 2025. Appeal in CASE No. 1 begins

To date, CASE No. 2 remains 'dormant', with no procedural action taken

Here is their 'evidence' in CASE No. 1:

- 69 volumes of case files
- 54 court hearings in a year
- Not a single piece of direct evidence of my guilt
- Witnesses admitted that they had only seen me on television

What they found during the searches:

A mobile phone containing family photos of my children.

What I did for Gagauzia:

- Over 100 km of roads built
- GagauziyaLand park opened
- 40,000 pensioners and public sector workers received monthly allowances
- Schools and hospitals renovated
- Seriously ill children receive help
- The Gagauz language and culture are flourishing

After the verdict

The regime thought it would break me with the verdict, but the opposite happened.

When the regime tries to break me, to make me renounce my beliefs, to force me to betray my people, I remember an old Gagauz proverb: Taştan su çıkmaz. You cannot squeeze water from a stone. It is impossible.

They think a woman in prison won't hold out. That she'll give in, renounce her mandate and betray those who voted for her.

My people have survived for centuries where others gave up. We squeezed water from a stone when there was nothing left. That is our character.

I will not give in.

With kind regards and gratitude,

Evghenia Gutul,

Governor of Gagauzia

Letter to My Sister

My dear sister,

You know what I remembered first when I was put in this cell? How I got stuck in grandma's old closet as a child. I climbed in to play hide and seek. The door jammed, and I started screaming through the whole house. I banged my little fists, trying to get out.

You ran and said (even a bit sternly): "Zhenya, stop screaming. Breathe deeply and count to ten. The darkness won't eat you. Calm down, I'll get you out."

I thought you were heartless then. Instead of pitying me, you were calming me down sternly! But a couple of minutes later, when I started breathing and counting "One, two, three...", I felt myself calming down.

A minute later, you opened the door and hugged me: "See? Everything is fine. Remember, fear passes when you take yourself in hand."

I didn't understand then that almost 35 years later, this lesson would be very useful to me.

Now in my cell, my mood is sometimes like emotional "roller coasters." And then I remember your words: "Calm down. Breathe. The darkness won't eat you. Take yourself in hand."

My schedule

In the first days, I remembered the phrase: "Happiness is a product of well-organised activity." It sounds funny in the context of prison, but imagine, inside prison, you can also organise your daily routine.

My morning starts with a glass of water. Imagine? Me, a person who couldn't bend over in the morning without coffee, now I drink water and have even got used to it. Then I wash my face, brush my teeth, make my bed, and get ready for the morning check.

After the check, I usually read.

At 11:00, I have a walk once a day. It's not really a walk, because it's a perimeter of 6 by 7 metres, surrounded by a high wall, at the end of which is an iron grate. A parody on a fitness club. But I walk along the walls, just to get the blood flowing a bit.

Then lunch and cleaning-up of the cell. Here I have a luxury — a floor rag. So I allow myself to do a full cleaning every day.

On weekdays, my lawyers come, and we have an hour of communication. This is the only normal conversation of the day. The rest of the time, I am alone with myself in a solitary cell.

I heard a theory here: those who are kept in solitary confinement either lose themselves due to the isolation, or they come out of prison as philosophers. Let's see which direction takes hold of me. So far, it seems to be leaning more toward philosophy. I read a lot, write a lot, speculate over eternal ideas. If I start quoting Kant in my letters, know that the process is in full swing.

Lights are out at 22:00, but I fall asleep later, around midnight. I have problems with sleep. I fall asleep late and wake up several times during the night. So many thoughts in my head.

I still cannot understand the verdict of the first instance. Judge Ana Cucerescu, who handed down such a harsh verdict, is my neighbour. We live in the same building. She is on the first floor; we are on the eighth. And I imagine how she regularly meets my children, Dan and Mark, in the entrance. Doesn't her heart miss a beat seeing two minor children growing up without their mother? I think about this constantly.

There are at least three tortures here.

First is the building itself. Old, recognized at the international level as a prison with inhumane conditions. Dampness, mold on the walls, cockroaches and mice everywhere. A lot! The first month, I slept with the light on because it seemed like they were running all over me. The authorities disinfected the cells twice, but in vain: they keep coming out of their holes anyway.

At first, I was very worried, couldn't sleep, and constantly heard them rustling. Then I thought: maybe I should name them? One will be Mickey, another Minnie Mouse, a third Rocky from "Chip 'n' Dale," who loved cheese.

When your night neighbors have names, they aren't so scary anymore. Although I still plug a special repellent into the socket to keep Mickey and his comrades at a distance.

The second annoyance is the bed. It is hard, a single bed. It took me a long time to get used to it. I put a winter blanket underneath – it became a little softer – but still, every morning I get up with a stiff back.

And the third is the siren outside the window. Yes, it is already great that the cell has a window, but the view is not the most inspiring: a high concrete wall with barbed wire and a guard tower next to it. When the guard changes, a siren goes off – such a terrible piercing wail that at first I wanted to cover my ears. I did not know where to run from it; I thought I would go crazy.

Now I am used to it, but I still flinch every time.

The other day I wrote to Mum and told her I was not afraid, that everything was under control and I was holding up. But I will tell you honestly, because you always knew when I was lying... I am scared.

I am scared that I will miss seven whole years of my children's lives. That Mark will forget my voice. That Daniil will learn to get by without me. That I will come out of here a stranger to them. Sometimes at night I wake up from these thoughts and cannot fall back asleep.

Just don't tell Mum, okay? She has high blood pressure, a weak heart. Let her think I am strong. She always tells me: "You are strong, my girl. You are brave, with a pure Gagauz character. Hold your head high. Never turn away from the path you have chosen."

But with you I can be weak – you remember that cupboard.

When I get overwhelmed here, I look at the quote hanging on my wall: "He who is master of his thoughts is master of his destiny." I try with all my might to control my thoughts. I try not to dwell on the bad things – the cockroaches, the hard bed, that wailing every day. I do not let "the darkness eat me." Remember how you read "The Wizard of Oz" to me when I was little? I was very small then, and you sat next to me and read about a girl walking down the yellow brick road. I asked: "Why didn't she give up? It was so scary and hard, wasn't it?"

You closed the book, looked at me and said: "Because she had a goal – to get back home. And she had friends beside her who helped her keep going. Everyone was scared: the Scarecrow, the Tin Woodman, and the Lion – but they walked together, and that made them stronger."

I, too, am like that girl now, walking my own road (only it is not made of yellow bricks). I also have a goal – to come back home.

There are nice things, too: I have many photos of our family in my cell. I look at them and remember those happy moments. Those photos are like windows into another life – a life that was so recent and now seems so far away.

I also have icons of the Mother of God. One was given to me by Mum in August when she attended a service with the Metropolitan. All the bishops prayed for my release that day. The second was given to me by the priest from the prison church, where I am sometimes taken. From Turkey, they sent me the myrrh of Saint Nicholas of Myra the Wonderworker, who leads innocent people out of dungeons. I believe it will help.

Do you know what was the hardest thing for me during our meeting? Not that the hour flew by like five minutes. Not even that we had to speak over the telephone, as if I were calling from another country. It was that I wanted to hug you, but between us was glass. You sat a metre away from me – I could see your face, but I could not touch you. All our hugs now are only in that little booth, over the phone, through the glass.

There was one long meeting with Artyom, 12 hours. They led us into a small room with a double bed and a television, locked the door. Twelve hours in a tiny space you cannot leave because the door is locked.

Artyom told me that Mark has started talking. He started speaking late. When I was still free, he could only say a few words. It pains me so much that I am missing these moments of his life. It hurts to realise that I do not hear his first phrases. My heart bleeds at that thought.

Those moments cannot be brought back.

...We had plans. On May 6, Mum turned 70 – we wanted to celebrate her anniversary. Then take Mum and the children to Turkey – to see a doctor because of her knee surgery. We had planned everything.

Unfortunately, we could not make it happen. But I promise: when I get out, we will do it. We will celebrate Mum's anniversary. We will go to Turkey as a whole family.

Before sleep, I look out the window at the barbed wire. I wish I could see the sky, but you cannot see it from here. In my mind I wish good night to all of you: to you, to Mum, to the children, to Artyom, to all the Gagauz. I think about how I will get out, how we will be together again.

In short, I dream.

Thank you

Remember how you ran home from school at the speed of light when I was brought from the maternity hospital? You were not just a sister to me – you were my second mother. A ten-year difference, but I was always your little friend. You took me everywhere with you: to meet your friends, on walks. Mum would say: "Will you two ever sit still in one place?"

Back then you made a vow to yourself: when you grew up, you would buy me everything I wanted. And you kept that promise.

Thank you for the fact that in the late 1990s, when you yourself were struggling, you went abroad to work and sent me the most fashionable clothes. I was the prettiest girl in my class – thanks to you. And you still buy things – not only for me, but for my children as well.

Thank you that when I entered university and moved to Chisinau, you became my support. You paid for my tuition, for rented accommodation, sent money for expenses. Without you, I would not have got a degree. You gave me the chance to become who I am.

You always took care of me, always supported my decisions, even when they were risky.

Thank you for flying from another country to attend court hearings, even though it is expensive and difficult. You were at most of them. I see you in the courtroom and I understand: I am not alone.

And thank you for being with me on August 5 – the worst day of my life. You and Mum stood a metre away from me when the verdict was read. I turned around, said "I love you" and made a heart with my fingers. That was all I had time for. You were there when the world collapsed.

You are the best sister God could have given me.

The future philosopher and just your little sister, who misses you terribly.

*Yours,
Zhenya*



Letter to the Members of the European Parliament

To: To the Members of the European Parliament, the Committee on Civil Liberties, Justice and Home Affairs (LIBE), the Committee on Foreign Affairs (AFET)

From: Evghenia Gutul, Baskan of Gagauzia, political prisoner of the Maia Sandu regime

I am writing to you from the poorest country in Europe:

- 34% of the population is below the poverty line (in villages — 42%)
- Average pension — 2,800 lei (140 euros per month — almost 10 times less than the EU average)
- Inflation over 5 years has been +75%, food prices have increased 2-3 times
- Public debt has tripled
- A third of farmers are on the verge of bankruptcy

And over the last two years:

- Over 20 opposition TV and radio stations were closed without a court decision
- Over 100 media were blocked before the elections
- Dozens of politicians received a lifetime ban on participating in elections
- The central authorities cut Gagauzia's budget revenue by a quarter following my election

My case is just one of many examples of how power is exercised in Moldova. In this letter, I have described only a small part of what is happening. All of this is documented.

Freedom of speech, independent courts, fair elections, protection of national minorities — everything that should make Europe Europe — is being systematically violated in Moldova. And the Maia Sandu regime calls this "protection of European values."

Before I show you the facts, I want to ask you: what do genuine European values mean to you?

Dear Members of the European Parliament!

My name is Evghenia Gutul. I am writing to you from Prison No. 13 in Chisinau.

In May 2023, I was elected head of the Gagauz autonomy — a region of the Republic of Moldova. On August 5, 2025, the Buiucani Court sentenced me to 7 years in a colony for a case in which the prosecution could not present a single piece of real evidence.

Today, I am a political prisoner of the Maia Sandu regime — a regime that calls itself "pro-European" and claims to protect "European values."

To me, they mean a place where you can disagree with the authorities and not go to prison for it. Where courts are independent of the government. Where you are not tried under laws invented retroactively. Where national minorities are protected, not punished for their choices.

But what is happening in Moldova under Maia Sandu is not European values. It is an imitation. Let me prove it to you with concrete facts.

MAIA SANDU vs. EUROPEAN VALUES

1. Freedom of speech

Since December 2022, more than 20 opposition TV and radio channels have been shut down in Moldova without a court decision. Initially, these media outlets were closed by the Commission for Emergency Situations in the Energy Sector¹ – a body that, by law, is chaired by the Prime Minister and has nothing to do with media regulation. Nevertheless, it was through this commission that unwanted channels were silenced. The Constitutional Court later declared these actions illegal, but that had no effect.

In October 2024, before the elections, more than 100 Telegram channels and websites were blocked. Many of them simply published opposition viewpoints.

President Sandu, in response to a journalist's question, said: "These are not mass media, these are mass disinformation media."

¹ The Commission for Emergency Situations in the Energy Sector is a body headed by the Prime Minister of Moldova. The decisions to close television channels were taken under Prime Ministers Natalia Gavrilița (December 2022) and Dorin Recean (October 2023) who are both close associates of Maia Sandu and her PAS party.

2. Judicial independence

Fact: In September 2023, the Court of Appeal of Moldova declared illegal the decision to remove the opposition party "Șansă" (Chance) from local elections (more on this case below).

After this ruling was handed down, Prime Minister Dorin Recean publicly, live on air, named the judges: "Remember three names – Ecaterina Palanciuc, Veronica Negru and Inna Dudca. This panel of the Court of Appeal yesterday annulled the decision of the emergency commission to hinder the criminal activity of criminal groups that tried to disrupt the electoral process in Moldova."

The public naming of judges by the head of government after an unfavourable ruling is not criticism of a judicial decision. It is an instrument of intimidation.

When judges are afraid to rule against the authorities, justice is dead.

This outraged everyone.

The Moldovan Association of Judges issued an official statement and called Prime Minister Dorin Recean's statement "a serious violation of the principle of separation of powers in the state and of judicial independence."

Here is what their statement said: "Attacks on judges, whether verbal, from representatives of the executive or other branches of government, undermine public confidence in the judicial system and can have a detrimental effect on the impartiality and effectiveness of the judiciary."

What would happen if the Prime Minister of France or Germany publicly named judges and said: "Remember these names"? The European Parliament would explode with outrage. But when the "pro-European" Sandu regime does it, the EU ambassador is silent.

3. Free elections

According to democratic standards, a country must have free and fair elections, and uphold the right of citizens to freely elect their representatives.

The reality in Moldova is this: the authorities systematically use three methods to keep the opposition from participating in elections.

Method 1: Last-minute removal

Marina Tauber – a candidate of the Shor Party who was leading the mayoral election in Bălți with almost 48% of the vote – was removed from the second round because of "undeclared pastries for volunteers." Court hearings on this matter lasted nearly 30 hours. The final decision was announced half an hour before polling began, when voters were already on their way to the stations.

The Chance Party, which was supported by Ilan Shor's team, was removed from local election on a Friday evening, 48 hours before Sunday's vote. The next day, a court declared the decision illegal, but the elections had already taken place.

Method 2: Intimidating judges

I told you about this above. As a result, judges understood that ruling against the authorities' instructions is dangerous.

Method 3: Lifetime bans

In June 2023, the Constitutional Court declared the Shor Party "unconstitutional." Parliament passed a law imposing a five-year ban on running in elections for anyone who had held leadership positions in that party. (This provision was later declared unconstitutional.)

For many candidates, this was political death.

Imagine this scenario:

In France, Macron removes a candidate from the ballot two hours before voting – because of undeclared croissants for volunteers.

In Germany, Scholz passes a law imposing a lifetime election ban on an entire party.

In Spain, the government cuts Catalonia's budget in half after Catalans elect an "inconvenient" leader.

Would you call that democracy? Or the end of democracy?

Real European democracy means that the people can choose freely, not "correctly". That the authorities fear the voters, not the voters fear the authorities.

In Moldova, the opposite is true: here, the authorities decide whom the people may choose. That is not democracy. It is a theatrical performance for Western partners.

Honourable MPs, if these are European values, what kind of Europe do we need?

4. Rule of law

The law does not have retroactive effect – that is the foundation of Roman law and European civilisation. This is a principle that is more than 2,000 years old. We remember it from our school lessons, when we were told about ancient Romans.

The state has no right to punish actions that were legal at the time they were committed. Because if the state can apply the law retroactively, it is not a state governed by the rule of law. You live in a state of absolute uncertainty and fear.

You cannot plan your life. You cannot be sure of anything: today you are a law-abiding citizen, tomorrow suddenly a criminal.

I was elected Governor of Gagauzia in May 2023 running as a representative of the opposition Shor Party. The party was legal, registered – but it was inconvenient for the Sandu regime. In June 2023, the party was banned. And in 2025, I was sentenced to 7 years for working with that party in 2019–2023, when it was still legal. The ban was applied retroactively: punishing the past.

Imagine that you started a business in France in 2023. Everything legal, all taxes paid, all permits obtained. In 2024, the government declares your type of activity illegal.

In 2025, you are tried for having engaged in that business in 2023, when it was allowed. And you are sent to prison for 7 years – not for murder or fraud, but for carrying on your business when it was legal.

Would you call that a state governed by the rule of law? Or lawlessness? In Moldova, this is done under the banner of "European integration."

Question: If Moldova violates a 2,000-year-old foundation of European law, is it moving toward Europe or away from it?

5. Rights of minorities

In Europe, the rights of minorities are protected. Catalans, Basques, Flemings – all have autonomy.

In Moldova, it is different: if you do not share the position of the PAS' party, you are punished.

Who are the Gagauz?

We are a Turkic-speaking people of Orthodox faith (a unique combination). The population of Gagauzia is about 155,000 people. The autonomy was created in 1994 – European

¹PAS (Partidul Acțiune și Solidaritate) is the Party of Action and Solidarity, Moldova's ruling party, led by Maia Sandu.

organisations called it a "successful role model" of a peaceful resolution of a conflict.



After my election:

Fact 1: The central authorities cut Gagauzia's budget revenue by one quarter. An autonomy of 155,000 inhabitants had to live on reduced funding. Only later did a court ruling declare these actions illegal.

One village teacher told me: "Evghenia, I have been teaching children for 30 years, but I have never seen the authorities take revenge on an entire nation for its choice."

Fact 2: According to the Moldovan Constitution, the Baskan of Gagauzia is a member of the Government with the right to vote. President Sandu did not include me in the Government – a direct violation of the Constitution.

Fact 3: All investment projects for Gagauzia were blocked by the central government after my election.

Fact 4: When a philanthropist transferred funds directly to Gagauzia's budget for supplementary pension payments (with all proper documents and taxes paid), those funds were frozen under the pretext of "suspicious origin," despite provided evidence of the transactions' legality.

This is not just pressure on one politician. It is the economic strangulation of an entire region for an "incorrect" choice. Is this the protection of minority rights by European standards?

Imagine what would happen if the Basque Country elected a leader who criticised Madrid. In response, the central government of Spain blocked all investment in the region and sent that leader to prison for 7 years.

What would Europe's reaction be? Sanctions, resolutions, international investigations, front-page headlines, Brussels statements about "unacceptable pressure on a democratically elected politician."

But when exactly the same thing happens to the Gagauz in Moldova — everyone is silent.

Moldova today

This is what happens when "European values" become a cover for the elimination of national sovereignty, the impoverishment of the population, and political repression against dissenters.

Maia Sandu is a citizen of Romania. She has two passports. She speaks everywhere about unification with Romania, calling Moldova and Romania "one nation."

Imagine the President of France holding a US passport and speaking about "closer ties with the United States." The President

of Poland holding a German passport and saying that "Poles and Germans are one nation." What would you think?

I ask a simple question: how can a person with two passports impartially represent the interests of a single country? Especially when that country is one of the poorest in Europe, while his other country is an EU member with a per capita GDP three times higher?

Sandu constantly talks about "European integration." But integration means countries coming together while preserving their identity. What is happening to Moldova looks more like absorption. The Moldovan language is called "Romanian." Moldovan history is being rewritten. Moldovan identity is declared a "Soviet myth."

But it is not only about passports. It is about who makes the decisions in Moldova.

When Sandu closed television channels, the US ambassador publicly supported it.

When Sandu removed the opposition from elections, the American embassy issued a statement about "protecting democracy." And that was under Biden, who constantly talked about democratic values.

When I was arrested, the EU ambassador remained silent, and Washington called it "fighting corruption."

Moldova does not make independent decisions. Every step Sandu takes is coordinated not with the Moldovan people, but with her foreign master. This is not conspiracy theory – these are public statements that can easily be verified.

Europe was supposed to be a union of sovereign nations with shared values. Moldova must have Moldovan values. France – French values. Germany – German values. That is the real Europe – a union of sovereign nations, not a colonial empire representing

the interests of a few clans.

Sandu has stolen the word "Europe." She has betrayed the real Europe for the sake of geopolitical games. She took the concepts sacred to Europeans – freedom, democracy, human rights – and turned them into empty slogans to cover up repression.



Moldova under Sandu is a warning to all of Europe: this is what happens when "European values" become a cover for:

- The elimination of national sovereignty
- The impoverishment of the population
- Political repression against dissenters
- Geopolitical games to the detriment of ordinary people

I ask you: if tomorrow the same thing is done to Estonia, Latvia, Slovakia, will you also call it "European integration"? Or will you say that it is a takeover?

This is not only a Moldovan problem. French, Germans, Italians, Poles – ordinary people all across Europe are facing the same thing.

When "European integration" for politicians means trips to Brussels and fine speeches, while for ordinary people it means a hospital closed in their town and expensive petrol. When those who ask inconvenient questions are told: "You are a threat to democracy" – instead of being given a proper answer.

I see this every day in Moldova. But judging by elections in different European countries, we are not the only ones who see this problem. People are tired of their opinion meaning nothing.

Honourable MPs, I ask you to:

1. Initiate an investigation into the human rights situation in Moldova.
2. Freeze support for the Sandu regime until democratic standards are restored.
3. Demand the release of all political prisoners, including me.
4. Send a European Parliament fact-finding mission.
5. End the double standards approach applied to Moldova.

I ask you to defend genuine European values. The very values that Europe has been proud of for centuries and for which generations of Europeans fought. Do not allow Moldova to become a precedent for destroying democracy under the pretext of defending it.

As long as my words can reach you, I will speak.

Not only for myself, but for 155,000 Gagauz.

With respect and hope for justice,

Evghenia Gutul,

*Baskan of the Gagauz Autonomy of the Republic of Moldova,
political prisoner of the Maia Sandu regime
Written in Prison No. 13, Chisinau, Moldova*

2026

P.S. For the European reader:

If you are reading this letter, you should know that I am not asking you to take my word for it. I am asking you to verify the facts. Everything I have written can be verified – court decisions, public statements by Prime Minister Recean, statistics on closed television channels, the budget of Gagauzia.

Today this is happening in Moldova. Tomorrow it could happen anywhere.

First they shut down inconvenient media outlets – this is dubbed “fighting disinformation.” Then they remove inconvenient candidates – this is called “protecting elections.” Then they imprison inconvenient politicians – this is “fighting corruption.” And all of this is called “protecting democracy.”

Moldova is a test: will Europe defend its values when it is inconvenient to do so? Or are “European values” just words?

Letter to Ilan Shor No. 2

Ilan Shor is a Moldovan politician, businessman, philanthropist, former mayor (primar) of the city of Orhei (2015–2019), Member of the Parliament of the Republic of Moldova of the 10th and 11th convocations, and leader of the Shor Party and the Victory (Pobeda) bloc.

He is subject to systematic political persecution by the regime of Maia Sandu. In 2023, the Shor Party was banned without valid legal grounds; the party has appealed this decision to the European Court of Human Rights. In 2025, the Victory bloc was denied registration for the parliamentary election.

Ilan Shor,

I already wrote you a letter when I found out you were closing all social projects in Moldova. And today I decided to write you a second letter, for a different reason. Someday, the regime will fall, and then the rewriting of history will begin. They will say that there were no repressions, that we are exaggerating and blowing things out of proportion.

And now I just want to document what you and your team went through. Not for you — you know all this anyway — but for the historians who will investigate what happened in Moldova during these years. Maybe it will be relevant for our children, who should know the truth, not the narrative that the authorities are trying to force-feed them.

I am addressing this letter to you because you are the main witness to this whole story.

The Pastries of Discord, or how the authorities tried to destroy what you are doing

So, you built Orhei, you helped Gagauzia, you did so many good deeds for the people in Taraclia, Bălți, all over the country!

I remember you once said: "It is easy to make a people rich if you really want to. It's just that Moldovan politicians have never needed that task."

And that is true – for them it was more important to provide themselves with villas, bank accounts, cars, to place relatives in cushy jobs, to keep mistresses.

A wealthy nation is dangerous for them, because wealthy people start asking questions, demanding answers, and they do not tolerate theft. A poor nation is more convenient – they are busy surviving, they have no time for politics.

So when you came and actually started making people richer, you became a threat to their entire system. And what did you get in return? Political persecution and repression against everyone who was with you.

Here are a few facts:

1. The Pastry Case

2021. Your candidate, Marina Tauber, gets 48% in the first round of the Bălți mayoral election – that's almost a guaranteed victory in the second round, everyone understood that.

And then, four days before the second round, the Central Electoral Commission suddenly goes to court demanding that she be removed from the election. For what? For pastries. The party was accused of exceeding spending on food, allegedly feeding volunteers pastries. Even though, in reality, people chipped in for the meal and bought everything themselves. But who cares? There is a script for the case – and they follow it. The truth hasn't

interested anyone for a long time. There is no truth, no justice, no conscience.

Then things got completely insane: two courts worked two nights in a row, about 30 hours in total. Why? So that, on election day itself, half an hour before the polls opened, they could announce: the second round is cancelled.

I remember hearing that news and simply not believing it – I thought someone was wanted to fool me. For the Sandu regime, pastries for volunteers turned out to be more important than democracy.

2. The Shor Party.

A court ban

In June 2023, the Constitutional Court declares the Shor Party unconstitutional.

In August 2023, Parliament passes a law: a five-year ban on running in elections for those who held elected office in a banned party. The law is immediately challenged in the Constitutional Court.

On 3 October 2023, just as candidate registration for local elections is about to begin, the Constitutional Court declares the law unconstitutional.

The next day, 4 October 2023, Parliament urgently passes a new law with the same prohibitions, but slightly different wording. The rationale is simple: there is one month left until the November elections, the court will not have time to annul it.

The Constitutional Court declares the second law unconstitutional only in March 2024, when the elections are long over. Thus, your associates were never able to run.

Individual and collective complaints have been filed with the European Court of Human Rights – both by the party and

by hundreds of its former candidates and members. Lawyers are confident that in the majority of such cases, the applicants win. But that will happen later, in a few years. For now, the party is banned.

You've been a target as well. You have been persecuted for so many years that one cannot even remember all the things they have pinned on you. What accusations haven't they plastered on you, what cases haven't they fabricated – they sentenced you in absentia to a prison sentence, they outlawed your party, they seized and confiscated all your property.

3. The Chance Party. The emergency commission decides the fate of the election.

On a Friday evening, two days before the general local elections in Moldova, the party Șansă (Chance), which you support, is removed from the election by decision of the Commission for Emergency Situations in the Energy Sector – that same commission attached to the Prime Minister, which in theory was supposed to deal with the energy crisis, not with removing parties from elections.

The party managed to appeal this decision, and the court declared it illegal, but it was too late – the elections were held without them.

After that, the Prime Minister, together with the head of the security service, publicly threatened the judges who had declared the removal of the party illegal: "This will not go unpunished for you!" That was done openly, without being embarrassed by cameras or journalists.

4. Television channels and Telegram. Total censorship.

In two years, more than 20 opposition TV and radio channels were shut down, without a court decision – they simply closed them through the emergency commission. In autumn 2024,

more than 100 media outlets were blocked. Why?

For spreading an alternative point of view, for telling the truth about how things are in Moldova, and for asking inconvenient questions.

5. My election as Governor and its aftermath

When you suggested that I run for the position of Baskan of Gagauzia in 2023, many did not believe that I could do it. But thanks to your team and support, we succeeded – we won 52 to 48 percent in the second round.

That was the moment when events took a sharp turn. First, they did not want to recognise the election results at all: law enforcement officers stormed into the Central Electoral Commission building, searches began, they seized ballots and voter lists.

At that moment, ordinary people gathered at the entrance – protesters, outraged that the central authorities were interfering in the electoral process.

In response, the People's Assembly of Gagauzia met in an emergency session and confirmed my victory, so that Chisinau could no longer cancel or challenge the election results.

Then the President violated the Constitution and did not include me, the lawfully elected Baskan of the Gagauz Autonomy, in the government, even though the law requires it. After that, Chisinau simply stole a quarter of our budget revenue – they took away money that by law belongs to Gagauzia. They blocked all investment in the region, cut off project funding.

When the Constitutional Court annulled this lawless decision, the authorities did not even apologise. They remained silent.

6. Frozen allowances for pensioners

Let us return to the subject of how the authorities threw a spanner in the works. First, you planned to give 1,000 lei (50 euros) to each pensioner – officially, through the state system. You transferred the money to the account of the Main Health Directorate. The authorities simply seized those funds. You showed all the documents, proved the legality of every transfer, but they did not care.

But that did not stop you, because you had promised to help and you found another way. NGO Eurasia, together with Promsvyazbank, signed an agreement for humanitarian payments. Thanks to coordinated efforts, we managed to provide 40,000 grandmothers and grandfathers with assistance of 2,000 lei (100 euros) monthly. Imagine: a person has a pension of 2,800 lei (140 euros), and they receive an extra 100 euros on top – that is a very significant supplement.

I recently calculated that just for the pension project you and your partners have invested 1,200,000,000 lei (almost 61 million euros) free of charge.

Not a loan, just aid. At the same time, the authorities have driven the country into such debt to the IMF that children not yet born will have to pay it back.

7. The gas blockade of Gagauzia

In autumn 2023, we decided to fulfil our main promise – to give people cheap gas.

Since 2021, gas prices had become a disaster. Previously we paid 4 lei per cubic metre (20 cents), then 18, 22, and at the peak – 30 lei (1.5 euros). Inflation exceeded 34%. People had to choose: heat their homes or buy bread.

You found partners in Turkey, arranged for supplies. You

did what the government, during two years of the energy crisis, could not or would not do. In October, we signed an agreement to supply gas to Gagauzia at 10 lei (0.5 euros) per cubic metre – half the market price...

But the authorities were frightened. Sandu said that the gas would be seized at the border and handed over to the state company, and she called the very intention to give Gagauzia cheap gas a lie. When the gas arrived at the border, it was not allowed through.

They began to demand statements from residents to change supplier. We opened an office in Comrat, and within a few days collected tens of thousands of applications. Just before the New Year, the gas supplier's licence was revoked.

8. The sabotage of aid to farmers

Then came the drought of 2024. The harvest perished on tens of thousands of hectares, farmers were on the brink of ruin, they had no money for a new planting season. You helped sign an agreement in Moscow for humanitarian aid: thousands of tonnes of diesel fuel, mineral fertilisers, ammophos. A shipment worth 400,000,000 lei (20,000,000 euros).



With this shipment, farmers could have carried out the planting season. They would have received fuel to plough the fields and sow grain as well as fertilisers so that the land would yield a harvest after the drought. They could have got back on their feet, grown a harvest, fed their families, given people work.

The central authorities never let the shipment through. The farmers were left with nothing.

Ilan, I know for certain: someday all this will end. The regime will fall, and then people will remember who helped them when times were hard, and who persecuted them for accepting that help.

Roads that you built will not disappear anywhere.

Children who laughed on your rides will remember that joy, and they will grow up to be good people.

Pensioners who were able to buy medicine thanks to your help lived several years longer.

And these letters, too, will remain as evidence of what really happened.

They thought prison would break me, but it turned out the opposite.

Here I realised that we did everything right.

We have already won, because we preserved our humanity and our values.

And that is the only thing that truly matters.

*With respect and gratitude,
Evghenia Gutul*

Letter to Vasily Litvinov

Colonel Vasily Litvinov is a World War II veteran. He was drafted into the army at the age of 17. He commanded a machine gun crew and fought from the first battles to Victory Day, taking part in the liberation of Ukraine and the Baltic states. He was awarded orders and medals for combat merit.

He lost his entire family during the war — his parents, brothers, and sisters were taken to German concentration camps; none of them returned. After the war, he served in the army for 30 years. In 2025, Vasily turned 100 years old.

My own grandparents also fought, and I grew up looking up to them. Now, when things are hard for me, I think of them, of you, of your generation that went through hell and remained human.

You went to the front at 17 – almost the same age as my eldest son Daniil now. I look at him and cannot imagine how someone his age can face bullets.

Back then at the school, you recounted how you commanded a machine gun crew, were wounded, lost comrades, saw death, went through what most people cannot even imagine. And you did not break.

And in the end you reached the Baltic states and celebrated Victory, when the Germans hung out white flags made from scraps of their clothing. That image stayed with me so vividly.

Moreover, after the war you served in the Soviet Army for another 30 years, then moved to Moldova and stayed here forever. And now, at 100 (!) years old, you grow vegetables, tend your vineyard, plant fruit trees, make plans for life.

That amazed me. A person who went through the war, who endured so much loss and pain, continues to plant, to grow, to make plans for the future.

Vasily, I would like to congratulate you on your 100th birthday. 100! I try to comprehend it, and I still cannot fully grasp it.

You were born in 1925 and you witnessed a world that no longer exists. You remember the telegraph and kerosene lamps in the villages. You remember silent cinema, you remember writing letters with fountain pens and waiting months for a reply, you remember what an event the first car in the village was.

And then you saw the arrival of sound cinema, then colour

Dear Dear Vasily,

Do you remember that at the beginning of 2025 I invited you to speak to schoolchildren? You showed up and told the children about the war, about how you commanded a machine gun crew, how you liberated the Baltic states and Ukraine. The children sat with their mouths open, and I stood to the side and thought: here is a living example of fortitude.

I was the Baskan of Gagauzia then, and now I am writing to you from Prison No. 13 in Chisinau, where I am serving a sentence of 7 years for not agreeing to remain silent.

Now I am undergoing my own test of endurance.

cinema, then televisions, computers, the internet, mobile phones. You lived through Mayakovsky and The Beatles. You saw entire generations of artists, writers, musicians be born and pass away.

You remember the USSR before the war, you remember collectivisation, you remember how the country was built. You were 17, you were drafted. You remember Stalin, Khrushchev, Brezhnev, Gorbachev – all the leaders of that country for which you fought. And then you saw it collapse, saw new borders appear where there had been none.

You have seen how Moldova changed from a Soviet republic to an independent state, you saw perestroika, you saw the 1990s and everything that happened afterwards.

A hundred years of life, a hundred years of history. And after all the losses and disappointments, after the collapse of the country for which you fought, you did not become embittered, and you did not break.

I remember your story. You told it to the schoolchildren, and I listened and thought: how could anyone endure this and remain human?

You went to the front very young, almost a boy. Before that, you lived with your family under occupation in Zaporizhzhia, and when the fascists retreated and burned your village, your parents and brothers and sisters were taken away to Germany. You saved yourself by hiding in the forest, and of the whole family only your grandmother remained.

You were drafted almost immediately, in your first battle you were wounded, and after the hospital you were made commander of a machine gun crew. And then came the war – real, terrible, where you commanded boys just like you who "had not yet smelled gunpowder." There, every day you had to make decisions that depended on other people's lives.

You told us about the battle when the Germans got drunk and launched an attack – they came like tanks, firing everywhere, and our men began to retreat. You shouted: "Stop! If we run, they will shoot us all!" – and you fired a burst from your machine gun. The Germans fell, the attack collapsed, and our men stopped retreating.

Vasily, I remember how you spoke about 9 May 1945.

When the news of Germany's surrender came, the incredible began: everyone started shouting "Hurrah!", hugging each other, crying.

And in the evening, the soldiers lit bonfires right where the fighting had been the day before. Throughout the war you could not light bonfires at the front because the Germans might see the fire and start shelling. But suddenly – bonfires everywhere, because the war was over, you no longer had to hide.

And some commanders who had fallen asleep and did not immediately realise that the war was over, woke up at night, saw the lights and cried out in horror: "Why are there bonfires?! The Germans will see them!" And the sentries answered with one word: "Victory."

For you and your comrades, that was Victory over fascism. It meant that you could go on living! You could return home, build a family, raise children, not be afraid of being killed tomorrow. You could finally stop hiding, stop expecting death every minute.

And what is happening in Moldova now?

The authorities have banned the Ribbon of Saint George – the symbol of victory over Nazism. People are fined for it – hundreds, perhaps already thousands of fines have been issued. The day of 9 May, when the Third Reich surrendered, has been renamed "Europe Day."

You fought against fascism, lost comrades, and now people are fined for remembering that victory.

And at the same time, in Moldova, monuments are being erected to Romanian soldiers who fought on Hitler's side – to those who took part in the occupation, who set up concentration camps on Moldovan soil. They are erecting monuments to them with honour ceremonies.

Imagine: in Europe, which says "never again will we allow fascism," they are erecting monuments to those who fought alongside the Nazis. And those who defeated Nazism are being forgotten.

During the occupation of Moldova, hundreds of thousands of civilians died – from hunger, torture, in concentration camps. Hundreds of thousands of Moldovans fought against Nazism. Many never returned.

And now the regime of Maia Sandu is erasing that memory.

When the authorities ban St. George ribbons, when they rename Victory Day, when they erect monuments to those who fought on Hitler's side – they are not simply erasing the past. They are opening a door to a future where all this could happen again.

Because if you forget who was the executioner and who was the victim, you can become confused once more.

That is why it is important to remember and not allow history to be rewritten.

Here, I think a lot about what connects generations.

Your generation went through the war. You lost your entire family, you were wounded in battle, you saw death every day. My generation grew up in the peace that you won.

But I have noticed: every generation has its own moment when life asks you the same question: "What kind of person do you want to be?"

When the fascists burned your village, you could have stayed in the forest and waited it out. You could have tried to survive at any cost, but you went to fight.

Why? I think, at some point, you answered that question for yourself: "What kind of person do I want to be? The one who hides, or the one who moves forward?"

I had my own such moment too. Not comparable to yours, I understand that. War is war, nothing compares to it, but the principle remains the same.

When I became Baskan and saw how ordinary people live, I could have pretended not to see. Yes, I could have occupied myself with protocol events, made proper speeches, not come into conflict with the authorities. They told me: "You have two children, why take risks?"

But then I asked myself the same question: "What kind of person do I want to be? The one who sees injustice and looks away because it is safer? Or the one who will not keep silent?"

I do not compare my choice with yours. You were choosing between life and death under bullets; I was choosing between freedom and prison in peacetime. It is incomparable, but the question is probably the same.

You answered that question for yourself long ago – back when you were 17 and you went to fight instead of hiding. And you have not betrayed that answer since.

How did you manage that? How do you live a hundred years and never betray who you decided to be?

I am writing you this letter not to complain, but because I need an example: how to live many years, go through hell, and remain human.

Here, in prison, I hold on and do not let them see weakness – not the prison convoy, not the guards, not the prosecutors. My mother taught me: "Not a single tear on your cheeks when you are among people."

But to you I want to admit honestly: yes, sometimes I am afraid.

I am not afraid to sit here, I am not afraid that they gave me seven years – I will survive that. I am afraid of something else: that my children will grow up without me, that Daniil is 15 now, Mark only 3. I am afraid that they will forget me or, even worse, will be ashamed.

I am afraid of the thought that my mother might not live to see my release – she has heart problems. Last year we buried Dad, and if something happens to her while I am here...

I am afraid that all of this is for nothing, that I risked everything and nothing has changed.

You know what fear is: you were at war, but you did not give up. You fought through the war to the end, lived a hundred years, and remained yourself.

Your example helps me to hold on. I would very much like to ask you the questions that I did not have time to ask during our meeting.

Tell me, Vasily:

– How did you find the strength not to break during the war? What kept you going at the front at 17 years old, when comrades were dying around you, what helped you to get up in the morning and keep moving forward?

– Were there moments when you wanted to give it all up, when you thought: "Why? For what?" Or did you always know exactly what you were fighting for?

– Were you afraid? How did you cope with it?

– How did you survive your wounds? What helped you to survive and return to duty?

– And most importantly – where do you get your strength at 100 years old? What makes you plant grapes, work in the garden, and, above all, live a full life?

I ask not out of idle curiosity, but because I need to understand: where to draw strength when you have none.

Take care of yourself, Vasily. Stay safe and strong.

*With respect and gratitude,
Evghenia Gutul
Prison No. 13, Chisinau*



***Letter
to Dmitry Konstantinov***

***Dmitry Konstantinov served as Chairman of
the People's Assembly of Gagauzia from February
2022 to November 2025.***

***In December 2025, he was sentenced in
absentia to 12 years in prison as part of the political
repression against the opposition.***

Dear Dmitry,

Recently, while reading a book in prison, I came across a quote by Mark Twain: "The two most important days in your life are the day you are born and the day you find out why."

I immediately remembered July 19, 2023. My inauguration. The day I understood why.

I remember waking up that morning. My heart was pounding so hard I thought everyone would hear it. The girl from Etulia who had once simply dreamed of doing something good for Gagauzia would be taking the oath as Baskan in just a few hours. I ran the oath through my head twenty times. I thought about every word I would say and every gesture I would make.

This isn't just a ceremony — it's a promise to the people. An oath taken before Gagauzia.

I was incredibly nervous. When I walked onto the stage, I looked at the people and saw so many familiar faces. In their eyes, I saw hope. When I began to speak, I was so overcome with emotion that I didn't even notice I hadn't placed my hand on the Statute of Gagauzia.

And you, so calmly, as if it were the most ordinary thing in the world, took my hand and placed it where it needed to be.



The journalists, of course, put on a real show with their headlines in the style of "Gutul violated several procedures at the inauguration!" I seriously thought they would start an investigation into exactly how you held my hand, at what angle, and for how many seconds.

But for me, that moment was not about a controversy. You know, the journalists were looking for a sensation, but they discovered ordinary human support. Apparently, they see it so rarely that they didn't even recognise it. For me, it was a warm sign that real support is not in loud words and promises. It is in taking the hand of a person who is worried and helping them. Simply and humanely. That is trust.

But the moment at the inauguration was not the first time you supported me.

I will never forget that night — May 16, 2023. We won the election, and a few hours later special forces were sent to Comrat. Law enforcement officers from the Anti-Corruption Prosecutor's Office broke into the Court of Appeal and the Central Electoral Commission and began carting away the ballots at night. The votes of our people were simply taken away.

You did not lose your composure. You gathered the MPs for an emergency session right in the middle of the night. You went out to the people and said: "Going against the will of the people is a spit in the face."

And the People's Assembly unanimously supported the decision of the Central Electoral Commission to confirm the election results, so that Chisinau could not cancel the will of the people.

That is when I understood: you are not one of those who speak beautifully and hide when the real struggle begins. You are one of those who stand firm. You showed how not to break under pressure and how to hold on when everyone is shouting "give up."

I am very grateful to you for that.

We have a different background, different ages, we look at many things differently. There were some of your decisions that I agreed with, but with some I did not. But that is what normal politics is like — when people can disagree with each other but still hear each other.

We might have had differences of opinion, but we always understood the main thing: we both stand for Gagauzia. That united us. And what about Chisinau? There, those who disagree are imprisoned. For them, there is only "our line or prison."

Thank you, Dmitry, for always being an example to me of how to remain human in politics.

*With respect,
Evghenia Gutul*

Letter to Marina Tauber

Marina Tauber serves as Vice-Chairperson of the Shor Party, which was banned in Moldova for political reasons. For about a year her freedom was limited, including during pre-trial detention and house arrest. In September 2025, the court sentenced her in absentia to 7 years and 6 months in prison. In 2025, she was forced to leave her native country because of severe political pressure, repression and threats from the authorities, but she continued the struggle from abroad.

If you are smiling now, please rest assured that I keep my sense of humour even in the darkest times. My grandmother always said: "Even in sorrow, find a reason to smile. We Gagauz have always known how to laugh even when others were already crying."

Marina, now you and I are in the same elite club, with a high membership fee paid in freedom. We fought for our people, for justice. And we both paid for it with freedom.

Marina, hello!

I am sitting in my cell, writing you this letter, and thinking about the irony of fate. Before, I used to run around between meetings, sessions, conversations with people – I didn't even have time to finish my coffee. And now, instead of the Baskan's office, I have the four walls of Pre-Trial Detention Centre No. 13 in Chisinau, and instead of my colleagues, I have guards.

And in these long hours, I often think about you. You have already gone through this "exclusive course of Moldovan hospitality for inconvenient politicians." As you already know, the agenda here is packed: early awakening to stay in shape, all the conditions for reflection, an antique building from the 19th century, and of course 24-hour guard (safety above all!).



During our last live meeting, I never imagined that the next time I would write to you would be under such circumstances. Now I have time – to remember, to analyse. Oh, how much time I have now to think about everything!

The most frequent question I hear here is: "What are you in

for?" You have heard that question many times too.

This morning I thought up another answer: "I'm here for the scarlet sails!"

Remember reading that book in school? A girl named Assol sat on the shore and waited for a ship with scarlet sails. She believed that one day a prince would sail up and take her away from that poor, grey life into a world where everything was different.

All girls read that book in childhood, all dreamed and waited. I also waited for more than thirty years. For someone to come and save Gagauzia. For the authorities in Chisinau to remember us, for the reforms to work, for the grants to reach the people. I waited for someone to build roads, someone to heal our children, someone to help pensioners survive the winter, someone to protect our language from disappearing.

We all sat on the shore and watched the horizon. Scarlet sails? Yes, yes, they will appear any moment.

The authorities said: "Be patient a little longer, very soon everything will change for the better, we are working hard to solve your problems, we are setting up commissions, we are developing programmes. Very soon prosperity awaits you – economic development that will make you all rich and happy."

A year passed. 2. 5. 10. 20 years.

But the ship never appeared. We waited and waited, but everything only got worse.

In 1989, 4.3 million people lived in Moldova. In 2025, only 2.5 million remained.

1.8 million people disappeared. Imagine that the entire Chisinau vanished from the face of the earth (and twice over).

Where did all those people go? They did not die of illness or disaster – they simply fled the country wherever they could.

Nothing changed... A few years ago I understood one simple thing: we cannot wait any longer. There are only us, our hands, and a heap of problems that have to be solved somehow.

Do you want scarlet sails? Sew them yourself.

That is what we did: we asked Ilan Shor for help – a man who believed in people, not in beautiful 50-page reports – we took our shovels and went to repair the roads. We did everything ourselves, without the lengthy documents of a "comprehensive road-building blueprint" that take years to be approved.

In short, we sewed those scarlet sails for ourselves from whatever was at hand. And people suddenly understood: it turns out things can be done differently. They saw that it is not necessary to wait thirty years for a bureaucrat to sign a piece of paper.

That is why I am here. A "very dangerous criminal." For this sewing workshop, I was given 7 years (for murder, by the way, they give less).

Marina, you also had a whole history of persecution. Remember your removal from the second round in Bălți because of "pastries"? Then came the lifting of your parliamentary immunity, time after time, arrests, Prison No. 13, house arrest, detention at the airport, a sentence in absentia, being put on the wanted list.

I watched those events and thought: how is such a thing even possible in a country that aspires to join the European Union? Now I sit here in this cell and understand: they tested the whole scheme on you. They were checking whether it would work or not.

It worked. The international community remained silent; the European diplomats you appealed to pretended not to notice anything. And then the regime understood the main thing: it's possible!

Your story with Bălți is not just your personal pain – it is the very moment when Moldova finally ceased to be a democracy, and the regime realised that it could get away with anything.

So here I sit in this Prison No. 13 and constantly remember your words. Remember how in 2022 you were locked up here for almost three months? Afterwards you came out and told journalists that this is how the authorities try to humiliate the dignity of an innocent person, how they try to break one's will, to pressure, to destroy. You said that the European Court of Human Rights recognised that the detention conditions did not meet minimum standards.

I heard that back then and rationally understood: "Yes, it is bad there, of course." But one thing is to understand with your head, and quite another to end up here yourself. Now I sit in this cell and think: "Marina did not exaggerate. Everything is absolutely accurate."

Do you know what I am now certain of? The regime uses these detention conditions as part of the pressure. They expect that when a person ends up here, sees these walls, these cockroaches and mice, all these conditions – they will break.

Then they will come out and say: that's it, I've had enough, I don't want any more politics, I just want to live quietly.

But it did not work on you. You came out of here and continued to do what you believed was right. You continued to defend people, to speak the truth, to fight for justice.

And it will not work on me either, because the truth remains the truth even when you sit in a cell.

After the verdict was handed down, my lawyers told me what the media were writing about it. I was often called a "victim of the regime." The same was written about you in your time.

I do not like being made into a victim, because I made this choice myself. I knew how it might end, I knew about the arrests – I saw what they did to you – and still I went ahead, because doing nothing seemed worse to me than facing any repression.

So I am not a "victim of the regime" (I don't like such loud words). I am a fighter, and I will not give up. I always say: "They cannot break me."

I remember once at the airport I came across the book "I Am Malala". I simply could not put it down. You have certainly heard about that girl.

Her name is Malala Yousafzai, she is from Pakistan, her story shook the world in 2012. She kept a blog and wrote about the importance of education for women.

When she was a 15-year-old girl, the Taliban stopped the school bus she was riding in. And they shot her in the head because she wanted to study and wrote about it.

The bullet went straight through her head. She was taken to the hospital, where she fell into a coma. Doctors said she had almost no chance of survival. But her body and will proved strong – she regained consciousness.

When she woke up in the hospital, the whole world had already written her off as a victim – everyone sympathised with the little girl who had suffered at the hands of fanatics. She could have fallen silent and lived quietly, got an education, built a career far from danger, and no one would have condemned her. But she continued her work, returned to the fight for girls' education and became the youngest Nobel Peace Prize laureate at seventeen.

In her book, there was an idea I agree with. She said that there are several forces in the world – the force of the sword, the force of the pen – but the most underestimated force is the power of women.

So here I return to the fairy tale of Assol.

That fairy tale is a kind, beautiful lie that teaches girls to sit on the shore and wait for a prince. Let's be honest: if you wait for a saviour, usually very different ships sail in. Their sails are not scarlet, but some dirty grey, and the captain is drunk with a bottle of rum. You and I, on the other hand, build our own ships and sew our own scarlet sails.

The Taliban wanted to silence Malala, but they got a Nobel laureate and a global movement. They wanted to frighten her, but they made her angry. And an angry woman is much worse than a frightened one. Well, you know.

That's our fairy tale, Marina Tauber.

Letter to Comrade Yuri

When I was detained, you were there. You immediately said: "This is a political hit job." And added: "We will prove we are right."

It was clear back then that the word "right" rings hollow for the current authorities.

But over these months, I realised something: being right is not what the courts recognize. Being right is what remains with you when everything else is taken away.

I know for certain that we did the right things – we helped thousands of people. And that cannot be taken away.

Here is something else I think about. You are highly skilled and have a good education. You could work somewhere quietly, earn decent money without any headaches. You could build a career. Instead, you chose politics. And what's more, you chose the side that is always under attack. When you joined the team, you already knew that the regime had declared us enemies. You gave up a quiet life for this struggle. And that says more about you than any diploma.

I remember once reading a parable about three stonemasons. They were asked what they were doing. The first answered: "I am striking the stone with a chisel, the work is boring and tedious." The second said: "I am earning money for my family." And the third smiled: "I am building a cathedral that will stand for a thousand years. I am building the future."

We too clearly understood what values we were working for, because we were building something that would remain after us.

Sandu does not have such a team. She has obedient officials who are afraid to take a step without instructions from above. Look at her entourage: there is not a single person who could contradict her. There are no professionals who have done anything significant

Yuri, hello!

You know, I don't sleep well here: the beds are hard, there is a lot of livestock like cockroaches and mice, and sometimes the howling of sirens is simply unbearable. And in such conditions, at night, I am often overcome by one and the same feeling: gratitude. To those people who stood by me, no matter what, and who became friends at work.

You are one of them.

I remember how you worked at night on our projects. You sat until three or four in the morning working on documents, finding solutions to the traps that Chisinau set for us every week. You were so good that it seemed everything worked perfectly well on its own.

on their own. There are only those who repeat her words and are afraid of her displeasure.

We showed something different: a leader with a strong team is more effective than a leader with an army of sycophants. That is why they are so afraid of us and so hate us.

A personality cult is easy to destroy: remove the leader – and everything falls apart. But a system where a team of professionals works is difficult to break.

We were building a cathedral that will stand for many more years. And we will build many more cathedrals.

Thank you, Yuri! And definitely — "See you later!"

Your comrade, Evghenia



Letter to Vladimir Buyukly

Vladimir Buyukly is the Chairman of the cultural association of Gagauz in Saint Petersburg, and a relative of Evghenia Gutul (born into the Buyukly family). After Evghenia's arrest, he became one of the main vocal defenders of her rights and actively speaks out in the media, telling the public about the political repression in Moldova. Vladimir unites the Gagauz diaspora in Russia and fights for their rights, including the opportunity to participate in Moldovan elections.

They told me about your interview to the media before the autumn parliamentary elections in Moldova.

In it, you explained a simple thing: according to various estimates, between 300,000 and 500,000 Moldovans and Gagauz live in Russia. The Moldovan authorities opened only two polling stations for them – and both in Moscow. Two stations for the whole vast Russia.

At the same time, in Italy, the authorities opened 75 polling stations for voting, even though fewer members of the diaspora live there.

You said straight out: this was done deliberately, because the authorities know that Moldovans and Gagauz in Russia are mostly opposed to them, so they were deprived of the opportunity to vote.

Technically, two stations do exist, so formally the "democracy" they love to talk about is respected. But in reality, people cannot physically travel from Vladivostok or Novosibirsk to cast a ballot.

And those who do make the journey face another surprise: there are not enough ballots for everyone. Only a limited number are brought to each station. Even in Moscow, only a few percent of those who wanted to were able to vote.

When you explained this, many understood for the first time how Moldovan "democracy" works. Their favourite method: not to forbid something openly, but simply to make it impossible.

Thank you for explaining the logic that many do not see: Chisinau is so afraid of the Gagauz Autonomy because Gagauzia stands in the way of Sandu's plans to turn Moldova into a colony of the West. That is the whole reason for the repression.

Dear Volodya!

I am writing to you from within walls where they try every day to break my will, but they cannot silence my voice. You know, when I first arrived here, at first the feelings were terrible... They deliberately cut me off from the whole world. It is very difficult psychologically: not to be near those you love, and not to know what is happening outside.

I so wanted to believe that out there, beyond the wall, people remember me and are fighting for me.

But then news began to trickle through. I remember, at the beginning of October, my lawyers came to me and told me about you and your struggle. How happy I was!

You and I share the same surname – Buyukly. In Gagauzia, everyone knows this surname (and it is not only because of us): the Gagauz remember the deed of our famous namesake Anton Buyukly, a Hero of the Soviet Union.

In August 1945, when the war was already drawing to a close and everyone knew that Victory was very close, he performed his heroic deed on Sakhalin during the war with Japan.

His unit came under fire. There was a concrete bunker from which a machine gun was firing at our soldiers. As long as the machine gun was firing, the soldiers could not advance – they were simply shot down. Grenades did not help; it was impossible to get close. And then Anton threw himself at the hole and covered it with his body. The machine gun fell silent, and his comrades were able to attack.

He repeated the deed of Alexander Matrosov. Imagine, there were only a few days left until the end of the war, and he could have returned home alive... But he chose to save his comrades. He gave his life so that they could live.

The Gagauz remember this story, but in official Moldova they are silent about him: the regime does not need heroes who connect our people with Russia. But in Russia, they remember him. Recently, an initiative was voiced in Moscow to perpetuate the memory of Anton Buyukly, so that the Gagauz diaspora would have a place to gather on Victory Day.

So it turns out: in Moldova, Sandu tries to erase our memory, while in Russia they preserve it.

I am proud of our surname: the Buyuklys did not hide when action was needed. Anton gave his life for the truth in 1945. You and I, now in 2025, are continuing that work, only by different means.

When the regime attacks one of the Buyuklys, the whole family becomes stronger. They wanted to imprison me and remove a Buyukly from the political arena. But the opposite happened: now there are two of us.



You give interviews, explain to the world what is happening, unite the diaspora. That is the real strength of a family line: when one falls, another picks up the banner.

Your support gives me the strength not to give up.

Please, keep speaking. Keep fighting. The Buyuklys never surrender.

*With faith in victory,
Evghenia*

To Ana Cucerescu

*Ana Cucerescu serves as a judge of the
Buiucani District Court in Chisinau that handed
down the sentence to Evghenia Gutul*

Mrs. Cucerescu

In Ancient Greece, there was a custom. The judge who handed down a death sentence had to spend the night in a temple. It was a ritual for them to be alone with the gods and their conscience, to think about their decision.

The Greeks understood that taking away a person's life or years of life is something that changes not only the condemned, but also the judge.

I am very interested, Mrs. Cucerescu: how did you spend the night after handing down the verdict? How did you sleep when you returned home to the first floor of our common entrance? How did you feel, closing the door and leaving behind the courtroom, seven years of my life, and two children's faces?

Did you sleep tight? Any dreams? Or you just felt like a person who'd done their job?

My family shares the same building with you. You are on the first floor, they are on the eighth.

Every morning, with a difference of 7 floors, different things happen.

On the first floor, the alarm rings: you wake up, stretch, go to the kitchen. Perhaps you make coffee, scroll through the news feed on your phone, and leisurely prepare for a new verdict.

On the eighth floor, the alarm also rings, but there a father wakes up with two children. Daniil is 15, Mark is 3. Their Dad cooks breakfast for them, helps them pack. Daniil can go to school on his own, he's a grown-up. Mark has to be driven to the kindergarten, and on his way there he would ask: "When will Mom return?"

And at that time, I wake up in a small cell, open my notebook, and write: more than 2,000 days remain until I can hug my children.

Seven years. I still cannot grasp this number as a human reality. It is not just a sentence – it is not only seven years of my life and the lives of my children, but also of yours, by the way.

For seven years, you will meet Dan and Mark in the stairwell every day, watch them grow up without me.

I am curious: what do you feel when you see them? When Danya walks home from school with his schoolbag, and Mark returns from kindergarten, knowing that his mother is not at home again?

Do you see them simply as the neighbours' children, or do you remember that these are the children who are now growing up without a mother because of your decision?

Doctors have the Hippocratic Oath: "Do no harm." It is a simple principle that should guide everyone who holds another person's life in their hands.

Judges have the scales of justice. Since ancient times, this has been a reminder that a decision is not born in the judge's head, but on the scales, where each side places its arguments.

In an ideal world, justice should look like this: the accused and the prosecution fill the scales with their arguments. Then the arguments are weighed, and the judge simply notes which side outweighs the other.

That is, the judge does not make a decision – the judge merely records it.

Now the language of court proceedings sounds like: "the judge handed down a sentence," but it should sound like: "the court recorded the preponderance of evidence." Not "I decided," but "the scales showed."

But here is the question, Ms. Cucerescu: did you really record, or did you decide?

When I look at the case files, I do not see scales. I see a pan that was filled before the weighing even began.

Not a single piece of direct evidence of my guilt.

Witnesses for the prosecution – people who had never seen me in person before the trial. Dates do not match. Testimonies contradict each other.

On one occasion, you reviewed 28 volumes of the case in one hour. That works out to just over two minutes per volume. 120 seconds for hundreds of pages of testimonies, documents, expert examinations.

Do you know what was actually on my side of the scales?

Two children. A clean record before this case. Work for the benefit of Gagauzia, which even opponents acknowledged. Hundreds of people ready to give me a character reference.

And on the prosecution's side? "A body of circumstantial evidence."

And the scales showed seven years.

Well, then: either the scales are broken, or someone kept a finger on the pan.



I am not asking you to reconsider the sentence, because it is pointless: you have already received your "bonuses" for this case. A promotion, gratitude, recognition... Whatever is given for such sentences.

I just want you to know: every decision has consequences. And the consequences of your decision live on the eighth floor. They pass by your door every morning. They have names — Daniil and Mark.

That is all I wanted to tell you.

Evghenia Gutul

Letter to my close friend Maria

I remember the first time I saw you at the Law Faculty of the State University. And I immediately thought: "We will be friends." You were the class leader, so serious and responsible, and I was the soul of the party – a girl with a short haircut who loved to laugh.

We were never those friends who call each other every day and tell each other absolutely everything. But there are people who simply walk alongside you through life.

And I sometimes think: what if, when we meet someone, we could immediately see what we will go through with them? You meet a person, and above their head, like in the movies, frames of your future flash by.

If back then, at university, someone had shown me our whole story, I would have seen so much! I would have seen that you would be there right to the very end – through all the exams, the sessions, when we crammed until morning...

I would have seen how you were there when I got divorced from my first husband, Daniil's father. When I was left with a small child in my arms and did not know what to do.

Then you helped me with a job. You told your colleagues: "I can vouch for her. She is a decent person. That is the most important thing; everything else can be learned."

I was the only person for whom you vouched so strongly.

Then you saw how I worked hard, started from the very bottom. You saw how I made my whole way to becoming Baskan of Gagauzia. You helped me arrange the inauguration – you came specially to Gagauzia to make everything at the highest level.

You saw how I met Artyom – that very man I had been waiting for my whole life. Remember how I told you about him enthusiastically over the phone, even though you were tired after work and needed to sleep, but I just kept talking and talking

Masha, hello!

In your last letter, you asked me: "How are you, the strongest person on Earth?" I re-read your letter several times and kept thinking: "What does it mean to be strong?"

And I realised: strength is when you know you are not alone. My strength is my family, my team, my friends. So yes, I really am strong. I know there are people who stand by me, who love and support me.

without stopping? How Mark was born, and I felt that life had given me a second chance.

Then you saw how I ended up here, behind bars.

And even here, behind these walls, you are still by my side. Just like twenty years ago at university.

...You know, here I worry a lot about you. My sister wrote that your mother has passed away. And my heart clenched, as if it were my own pain. In that moment, I understood especially sharply what true friendship is: it is when you ache for the other person and for everyone they hold dear.

You and I are at that age when it is so important to be close to our parents. They grow old, and there is so little time... And I have been deprived of that. That is why I feel you so deeply right now.

I am hugging you tightly. You are not alone.

You recently wrote to me: "I love you! Soon everything will be fine, all dreams will come true."

I dream of a little house by the sea. You will come to visit, and we will spend time together. We will sit under blankets and look at the sea. And I also imagine us forty years from now. We will be sitting in a café, chatting non-stop, remembering how much we managed to accomplish over the long years.

And this prison will seem like a tiny episode in a long life.

You will see, Masha. Hugging you tightly.

Zhenya

Letter to Todur and Ivanna Zanet

To collect 56,000 words – that is a whole universe. And every time you open a page, you realise: these are not just words. They contain proverbs, riddles, folk signs, the wisdom of generations – the soul of the Gagauz, their way of seeing life and feeling the world.

You know, when you see such a piece, you immediately understand: only special people can work like that. People for whom a cause becomes not just a profession, but the meaning of life.

When I was a child, I was told a parable about God. When a person is born, God touches their face with His palm and whispers their purpose into them. Everyone has their own. Someone is destined to heal people, someone to build houses, someone to bake bread. And all their life, a person searches for that vocation.

Many never find it and live with a feeling that something is missing. But those who find it recognise it immediately, and a fire ignites inside them. You do not get tired, even if you work to exhaustion. You do not doubt, even if everyone around you says it is pointless.

So when I see a piece of work like the one you have done, I immediately understand: you heard what God whispered at your birth. You found your purpose – the very thing you were born to do.

I have always admired such people. Albert Einstein, who spent his whole life trying to understand the structure of the universe and decipher its laws. Nikola Tesla, who slept three or four hours a night, studying electricity. Or Vincent van Gogh, who painted even when he had no money for paints or canvas.

And you belong to the same category of people.

Ivanna, you were born in 1930. You have lived a long life – worked on a collective farm, in a factory, in a school canteen, raised children, experienced everything that your generation had to live through. And at the same time, for decades you collected Gagauz

Dear Todur and Ivanna!

Bütün üreklän şükür ederim!

This phrase in the Gagauz language conveys more accurately than all others what I feel towards you today. This phrase means gratitude with all my heart. In the Gagauz language, there are many words that do not just name feelings but reveal them from the inside, showing the full depth of the experience.

I am so glad that I managed to receive the advance copies of your dictionary while I was still free. I remember that day: holding six volumes in my hands, smelling of fresh print. I held each volume and leafed through the pages. And with each new page, I felt an ever-growing amazement: how is this even possible?

folklore – recording riddles, signs, expressions, words you heard from old people, from neighbours, from relatives. That requires so much patience! And Todur took this priceless material, added his knowledge as a writer, a playwright, his work as a scholar, and turned it all into a scientific paper. Now it is an encyclopaedia of the Gagauz language that generations will use.

I calculated out of curiosity: if you collect five words a day – and that means finding a word, hearing it from native speakers, verifying its meaning, finding proverbs and sayings with that word – that comes to 11,200 days. More than 30 years! And that is if you collect five words every single day, without weekends or holidays.

You have not just created a dictionary. You have created a monument to the Gagauz language that will stand as long as the people live.

I remember when at school we were told about World War II, our history teacher said: "Language is the soul of a people. When someone wants to destroy a nation, the first thing they do is destroy its language."

And he told us: when Hitler came to power in 1933, the first thing he did was start burning books. Thousands of "non-German" books burned in huge bonfires all over Germany. Later, the Nazis continued to destroy cultural heritage: they destroyed thousands of works of art from German museums – unique pieces by Picasso, Van Gogh, Chagall.

Hitler understood: if you destroy a people's culture, the people themselves will disappear afterwards. Because without language, without books, without songs, people lose their connection to their ancestors. And when the connection between generations is lost, the nation becomes faceless. When memory is destroyed, you cease to understand who you are.

Language is not just words; it is a way of thinking and feeling. In language lies the philosophy of a people, its values, its understanding of good and evil. When a language disappears, an entire world disappears.

Preserving a language means giving people the right to be themselves, to remember their ancestors, to pass on to their children what they received from their parents. It is a living link between generations – the very thing that makes the Gagauz, Gagauz.

Here I have a lot of time to remember everything I have known or read about languages as the defining force of a nation.

You know, in every language there are words that cannot be translated. These words are like windows into a culture. They show what matters to people, what they lack, how their life is structured.

For example, the Danes have the concept of "hygge". There was even a series of books about hygge. This word denotes the warmth of home when it is cold and dark outside. Candles, a blanket, hot tea. They invented this word because Denmark has long winters, and they wanted to name what warms you even when winter is outside.

The Japanese have the word "karoshi". I once read an article about it. It means death from overwork on the job. In Japan, the work culture is so harsh that people literally die at their workplace – their heart simply stops. This word speaks about the Japanese attitude to work, to duty, to loyalty to the company.

Among Italians, one of the most popular words that has spread beyond the country is "dolce far niente" – the joy of doing nothing. The pleasure of simply enjoying life: sitting, looking out the window, slowly drinking coffee and eating pizza.

All these words reflect people's attitude to life, their values and meanings.

I want to tell you about my favourite word in the Gagauz language.

That word is *kismet*. Happiness. It does not just mean happiness, but happiness as destiny, as what is ordained. When the Gagauz say "*Kismet sizä!*" ("Happiness to you!") – it is not just a wish of good luck. They are wishing that your life unfolds according to a higher design, that you live it in line with your true purpose.

And when you leaf through your dictionary, when you read the proverbs that you have collected there, you begin to understand what *kismet* means for a Gagauz. You understand the Gagauz code of honour.

If I were asked to talk about the Gagauz through proverbs and sayings, I would choose these seven.

1. Aylene hem Vatannına izmet et. Allaha umut et, ama sän dä hodullanma

"Take care of your family and your homeland. Hope in God, but do not be proud yourself."

This proverb contains several important ideas. First, family and homeland are sacred. A Gagauz always works for his family and for the good of his fatherland – that is the meaning of his life. Second, a balance between faith and action: hope in God, but work yourself. And do not be proud – remember that everything you have is a gift, not only your own merit. You cannot sit idle and wait for everything to resolve itself. God helps those who try themselves.

2. Ani adın çıkacak, taa islää canın çıksın

"Better that your soul should depart than that your name be disgraced."*

For a Gagauz, honour is the meaning of life. An iron-cast value. Better to die than to live with a disgraced name. This idea is very close to me, because I too made a choice: yes, I am in prison, but I have preserved my honour. When you read this proverb, you understand: the Gagauz do not joke with honour. For them, it is sacred.

3. Ünümäk kötülüktür

"Boasting is a bad quality."

Another important Gagauz value is modesty. Even if you have done something great, do not boast about it yourself. Let people judge you by your deeds. I remember how, in my childhood, when one of the children started boasting, the elders would always stop them: do not boast, let the people speak for themselves. This was instilled from an early age. Deeds speak for themselves.

4. İilik yapasın, iilik bulasın!

"Do good and you will find good!"

This means that you will always receive in return what you give. My mother always said: "What we do for others comes back to us in the same measure. Maybe not right away, but over time it will – good or evil." And I have seen this in life. I have seen how people who spent their whole lives helping others, in their hour of need received help from those they never expected.

5. Sorma ihtära, sor çok görenä

"Do not ask the old man – ask the one who has seen much."

This is a powerful proverb. It says that wisdom is not age – it is experience. You can be elderly, but age does not make you wise. But you can be young, yet have seen much and learned much. In the villages, they always knew whom to go to for advice – not necessarily the oldest, but the one who had lived life with

sense, who had made mistakes and learned, who had seen people.

6. **Musaafiri herzaman kablet!**

"Always receive a guest in style!"

The law of hospitality (konaklık) is sacred for a Gagauz. By tradition, the Gagauz considered it their duty to take in a traveller at any time of day or night – to feed him, give him a place to sleep, protect him. Even if he is a stranger, even if you yourself have little, you are obliged to receive him, because tomorrow you might be in his place. I remember how people could come to our home at any time, and they were always seated at the table. Even if the family themselves ate modestly, the best was always reserved for the guest.

7. **Kim datmadı acıdan, annamêêr tatlıdan da**

"Who has not tasted bitter will not understand sweet either."

Who has not known sorrow has not seen happiness. To appreciate the good, you need to have experienced the bad. To understand joy, you need to know what pain is. This is life wisdom that teaches you to value what you have. Now that I am here, I understand the value of freedom differently – of things that used to seem ordinary: going outside, seeing the sky, hugging your loved ones.

Now, sitting in my cell, I often remember these proverbs. They keep me strong, they remind me who I am.

And do you know what helps me not to break here? Memory. I remember everything that connects me to my people. Words, songs, holidays. I even sing the Gagauz anthem to myself here in my cell. "Neither time nor misfortune could break you. May the Lord keep you, my Gagauzia." My throat always tightens at those words. We remember how hard-won what we have now was.

Music and dance are the soul of the Gagauz people. The music of Maestro Petr Petkovich sounds all over the world. Every year we gathered for his concerts in the autonomy, and it was always a celebration. And Vitaly Manzhul and his team breathed new life into Gagauz music – modern rhythms in the native language. They perform at international festivals, and I am proud that our language is heard all over the world.

...When I think about the Gagauz language now, my heart grows heavy, because it is being killed. At the beginning of 2025, the Ministry of Education approved a new staffing plan for kindergartens. The plan includes a position for a teacher of Romanian, but no position for a teacher of Gagauz.

This means that more than 70 Gagauz language teachers will lose their jobs, and more than 5,000 preschool children will not be able to learn their mother tongue.

Children are being prevented from learning the language of their grandparents, and this is done deliberately. It is politics, because the authorities understand: if you kill the language, the people will die next.

When a language disappears, an entire world disappears. With all its kismet, with all its proverbs and songs. Children stop speaking the language of their ancestors. The link breaks. And after one or two generations, the people cease to be themselves.

I fought for the right of the Gagauz to be themselves, and now I am here, within these four walls.

But what helps me a lot here is a saying I heard as a child: "Taştan su sızmaa" – "to squeeze water out of a stone." It meant to do the impossible – to achieve a result where it seems nothing will work.

Everyone knows that you cannot squeeze water from a stone, but if you are persistent, everything is possible. That is the Gagauz character. And it is about me – I am a fighter by nature.



You too have squeezed water from a stone: you created a dictionary of 56,000 words. Decades of work. And now, whatever the authorities do, the Gagauz people have these six volumes.

Now I sit in a small cell and cannot do for my people what I want. But your dictionary is kind of a replacement. It tells the world: the Gagauz exist; they have a language, a culture, a history. We cannot be erased.

Thank you for this effort. On behalf of all the Gagauz who will be born and will leaf through your dictionary, trying to hear the voices of their ancestors.

Bütün üreklän şükür ederim!

(From the bottom of my heart, I thank you!)

***With respect and gratitude,
Evghenia Gutul, Baskan of Gagauzia***

Letter to My Teachers

Thank you for teaching me to love my land

I remember a geography lesson. The teacher pointed to the window and said: "Look. This is your land. Your grandfathers and great-grandfathers lived here, here they grew grapes, ploughed fields, built houses. Your children will live here. Gagauzia is not just a dot on the map. It is one of the most beautiful places on earth, if you look at it with love. Love it. Protect it. Defend it."

I am fighting for Gagauzia because this is my land. The most beautiful land in the world. And if someone tries to take away our rights, to erase our identity, I will defend it.

Thank you for teaching me to ask questions

Once in a history lesson, the teacher said a phrase that I remembered forever: "Always ask questions. Always compare what you are told with what you see with your own eyes. Textbooks are written by people, and they do not always write the truth. History is not what is written in books. History is what your grandfathers and grandmothers lived through. Learn to think for yourselves."

Those words stuck in my memory. When the authorities tell me one thing, but I see another – I ask questions. That is exactly why I have been imprisoned. But you taught me: the right questions are always uncomfortable for those who fear the truth.

Thank you for teaching me to believe in myself

In a history lesson, someone from the class said: "Anyway, one person cannot change anything." It was ordinary teenage cynicism: why try if nothing will work out anyway?

The teacher told us about Václav Havel – the Czech playwright who wrote the truth about the authorities. He was thrown in prison, his plays were banned, he was persecuted. But he continued to speak the truth. And do you know what happened? A few years later, he became president of his country. One person who did not keep silent changed an entire country.

Hello, my dear teachers!

As you probably know, I am currently in prison. Perhaps this is the last place you expected to receive a letter from your former student.

I know that the authorities are putting pressure on you now, so I will not address anyone specifically by name. I don't want to cause you unnecessary problems. But I cannot help but write to you, because I must thank you for making me who I am.

Then she looked at us: "Never think that you are too small to change anything. Every big change begins with one person."

When I became Baskan and all of Chisinau was pressuring me, I remembered those words. One woman can change a lot, even if she has to pay a high price for it.



What I want to say

Dear teachers, thank you for everything you have given me.

Now I am in prison, and someone will say that this ended badly. But I regret nothing, because you raised in me a person who lives by their conscience. And that is worth a great deal.

I have two sons – Daniil and Mark. Mark is only three years old, Daniil is already a teenager. They are growing up without me now, and I miss them terribly. But I hope that when they go to school or continue their studies, their teachers will be like you. Those who will teach them to think for themselves, to love their land, and not to be afraid to ask uncomfortable questions.

Teaching children to think is the most important work in the world, and you do it every day.

*With deep gratitude,
Your student, Evghenia Gutul*

Letter to My Team

My dear ones!

When I was about eight years old, I watched a documentary about wildlife on TV. I remember one scene that stuck in my memory forever.

They showed a herd of wild horses. They were running across the steppe, when suddenly a pack of jackals formed around them. The jackals attacked one mare, grabbed her by the leg, and tried to separate her from the herd.

At that moment, the whole herd abruptly turned around and stood around her in a ring. Shoulder to shoulder. They did not run to save themselves; they stood as a wall. And the jackals retreated because they understood: you cannot get to one; you'll have to fight everyone.

I remember how the narrator later explained: "When jackals see a strong opponent, they do not attack head-on. They try to wear him down and break him. They are cowardly alone, but they grow bolder in a pack. They only attack when they are sure of their numerical superiority."

I sat there in front of the TV and thought: "That is what a real team means – when everyone stands up for each other. And that is what it means to be a jackal – to be afraid of the strong when you are alone, but to attack in a pack."

More than thirty years have passed, and I have found myself in the same situation. They wanted to isolate me, they offered me a shameful deal: give up my mandate in exchange for freedom. And you, my team, formed a ring around me.

Now I sit in this cell and think: what happiness it is to have such a team.

Ilya Uzun, my first deputy.

After my arrest, you took over the duties of the Baskan and immediately released a video address to the people of Gagauzia, calling my arrest "a political reprisal against the will of the Gagauz people": "The Chisinau authorities have chosen repression instead of dialogue, a show trial instead of justice. That is the true value of their talk about European values and judicial reforms. Let Chisinau know – the harder they pressure us, the more powerful our response will be! Evghenia Gutul is a Hero of Gagauzia, and her struggle is our common struggle. We will not retreat. We will win."

All of Gagauzia heard those words. People understood: their Bashan is in prison, but the autonomy's government is holding. The Executive Committee is working. The course is preserved.

Thank you for not losing your composure at the most critical moment.

Viktor Petrov, my second deputy.

You work for Gagauzia every day, even though pressure has also fallen on you: sanctions lists, detentions, threats. They tried to break you, to make you retreat.

True character is not tested in calm times. It is easy to be principled when no one is pressuring you. But to stand firm when they tell you: "Renounce your convictions, renounce your team, and we will leave you alone" – that is something else.

You carried on with your duties. Thank you for your loyalty..

Bo our entire Executive Committee team, I want to say the following.

I want you to know: I am proud of every one of you, from department heads to ordinary specialists.

Every morning you come to work knowing that they might come with searches. You are summoned for "preventive talks" at the prosecutor's office. You are forbidden to travel abroad. You are fined for participating in rallies.

You make decisions knowing that you will be blamed for every mistake. You defend the interests of Gagauzia knowing that no medals will be given for it.



But you still do your work, because you remember who we are here for.

They can imprison me, they can pressure you, block projects, but they cannot take away the main thing – our will and our unity.

As long as we are together, we are invincible.

Your Governor, your comrade, your friend

Evghenia Gutul

To My Friend Irina

Dear Irina!

For some reason, that day stands out so vividly in my memory.

Do you remember, we were at a celebration marking the victory of our colleague in the local elections? There was a magical atmosphere: thousands of people gathered in the square. I felt such a sense of unity and warm joy from real change — not just promised change.

I came there with a delegation from Gagauzia, and we brought a piece of our culture with us. Do you remember our Gagauz homestead? We set it up right there in the square — showing the traditional way of life of a Gagauz family, treating everyone to dishes from our cuisine. And the children from the folklore ensemble put on a real fashion show in national costumes!

I remember how we all stood on stage and talked about what wonderful projects would be continued.

To be honest, we already knew back then that the struggle would not be easy. The party would be banned, thousands of people would be banned from participating in the elections, the faction would be dissolved. The regime thought that would be enough to make us give up and scatter.

But we didn't give up. We created a new bloc, united people around a cause rather than around a party name. And that celebration where we marked our election victory was living proof: you can't break us with bans. People didn't vote for a party — they voted for results: for roads, for street lighting, for a life getting better.

I remember how you told me about a road you built. You said that people had waited for it for many years: for decades, that road was full of potholes, and in bad weather it turned into impassable mud.

You told me about one woman who wept with joy when she saw the smooth asphalt. She confessed: if it rained, she simply could not take both children to kindergarten by herself. She had to carry the children in her arms, which is almost impossible for one woman.

You quoted her words: "Now it has become a pleasure."

There was such joy in your eyes when you told me this. I thought to myself that this road is like a symbol of what we do.

A road is a path that gives people the ability to move forward. A mother can take her children to kindergarten, a farmer can bring in the harvest, a doctor can reach a patient. Life begins to flow differently when there is a proper road.

And we built those roads. We did not just promise — we built. That is the difference between us and those who are in power now.

And now, sitting in prison, I often think about this: the roads we built will not go anywhere. The street lighting in the villages continues to shine. The renovated schools continue to teach children. The hospitals we put in order continue to heal people. The playgrounds, parks — all these projects are real, they live on, they serve people every day.

And every time that woman walks her children to kindergarten along the smooth asphalt, every time residents turn on the street lights, every time children play on a new playground, they remember who did this. No bans, no lies from the regime can erase that memory.

The day will come, and we will meet again.

Maybe it will be there, where thousands of people will gather again to celebrate not bans, but freedom.

Maybe in Comrat, where Gagauz children will again dance in national costumes, knowing that a bright future awaits them.

Maybe in Chisinau, when that city finally ceases to be the capital of a dictatorship and becomes the capital for all citizens of our country.

We will meet and continue the work we started. Because the roads we built together lead to the future.

Evghenia

Letter to Mihail Vlah

Mihail Vlah is a public figure of Gagauzia, former Chairman of the Supervisory Board of the public broadcaster GRT. He actively participates in the political life of the autonomy, and was one of the organisers of the Gagauz referendums on February 2, 2014.

Mihail, hello!

When I was first elected Baskan of Gagauzia, a wise person gave me some advice: "Choose your partners not by their loud words at the start, but by how they withstand the blow when everything goes against you. Loyalty in a storm is worth more than any contract."

I later realised how important those words are. Withstanding the blow is the most important thing, because many break as soon as the pressure begins. They give up, retreat, or betray – while others withstand the blow no matter what.

What blows have we not endured together, what accusations have not been thrown at us? I have been sentenced to seven years in prison on a fabricated case. You have been detained for social media posts, accused of incitement to violence. But you continue to do what you believe in.

You were with me at the rally in Comrat after my election, when they were already starting to sling mud at us. You helped collect hundreds of thousands of signatures for my release, set up a tent camp in Chisinau that was brutally dispersed, but you did not back down.

They managed to accuse us of every mortal sin, counting every leu, every trip, every word.

While they were digging through all of that, we were doing truly important things. Let's recall what we managed to achieve thanks to the support of the philanthropist Ilan Shor, who always stood by us.

And thanks to this, we in Gagauzia changed the lives of thousands of people:

We built and repaired roads

In Congaz, Svetlii, Baurci, Djoltai, Gaidar, Etulia, Cotovscoe, Rusca Clișeva, Chiriet Lunga, Congazcicul de Sus and many other villages, there is now asphalt instead of impassable mud.

You know, for me this is not just numbers and not just a project. My father was not brought to hospital in time. He could have been saved, but what really "killed" him were the roads – broken, impassable, where the ambulance got stuck in the mud and potholes.

Good roads are not just comfort; they are what save people's lives. When every minute counts, when every second decides whether a person lives or dies, the road becomes that very line between life and death. And we changed that.

We created the dream park GagauziyaLand

You know, this was one of the most ambitious projects: to create a real amusement park for our people. And we did it – rides, concerts, entertainment for children and adults. A place where you

can relax with the whole family, forget your problems, simply be happy – and completely free of charge.

And for the New Year and Christmas celebrations in 2025, the park was visited by 200,000 guests! Not only from Gagauzia, but from all over Moldova and even from abroad.

My classmate sent me a photo of her children on the carousel and wrote: "Thank you for our children's childhood! The kind we never had."

What we did for children

We provided money for treatment to sick children whom the state could not help.

We built 22 playgrounds in our villages so that children could play in safe conditions and teenagers could get into sports.

We also repaired the roofs of 19 schools in the autonomy, carried out dozens of projects in sports schools and creative arts centres.

We equipped schools – from interactive whiteboards to backpacks and school supplies. We built sports grounds, outdoor exercise equipment, play areas. In Baurci, we created an entire sports facility with modern equipment.

What we did for pensioners

One of the programmes dearest to my heart is the "Golden Age" – dancing to live music, social gatherings, conversations for elderly people all over Gagauzia. For many, this was the only opportunity to get out of home, to socialise, to feel needed.

I know of cases where lonely pensioners even found their spouses. Falling in love again at 70, fancy that!

We organised patronal feast days in every village with festivities and treats.

There were two important projects that could have helped thousands of people, but they were blocked by the central authorities.

1. In October 2023, with the support of the philanthropist Ilan Shor, we arranged for gas supplies at 10 lei (0.5 euros) per cubic metre – half the market price! The residents of Gagauzia could have saved their family budgets, bought food and medicine, and looked to the future with confidence. Tens of thousands of people submitted applications to change their gas supplier.

¶The gas already reached the border, but Maia Sandu and her accomplices blocked the supplies.

They could not allow cheap gas in Gagauzia while the rest of the country paid three times as much. Instead of giving people warmth, they chose to freeze them politically.

2. The drought of 2024 was a disaster for farmers. They found themselves on the brink of ruin. The harvest perished on 56,000 hectares; the damage amounted to 397,000,000 lei (almost 20,000,000 euros). Thanks to the philanthropist, an agreement was signed in Moscow with the NGO Eurasia for the delivery of 12,000 tonnes of humanitarian aid: 5,000 tonnes of diesel, 7,000 tonnes of fertilisers. The value of the shipment was over 400,000,000 lei (20,000,000 euros) – completely free of charge.

But the PAS¹ party blocked the deliveries – purely out of revenge, the shipment was not allowed through. Farmers were left without help, and people without food.

That is what we did, Mihail. That is what we worked ourselves to exhaustion for.

¹PAS (Partidul Acțiune și Solidaritate) is the Party of Action and Solidarity, Moldova's ruling party, led by Maia Sandu.

Yes, there were those who, during our struggle, stabbed me in the back. I regret that sometimes I trusted the wrong people. There were people to whom I opened my soul, and they betrayed me. They used trust as a weapon, turned around and went over to those who are destroying us.

But there were also many who stayed. You are one of them, Mihail.

In business, they say that the true value of a partnership is known not during the ascent, but during the storm. When the waves crash over your head and it seems that the ship is about to sink.

Thank you for being there when I was detained, when my house arrest was extended again and again, when they demanded nine years in prison for wanting to help our people.



You organised rallies that the police dispersed with batons.
You spoke the truth when everyone else was silent out of fear.

And you know what? They think they can break us. They think they have stopped us, that we are finished.

But I want to tell you: we have only just begun.

And we will get through this, just as we have got through everything else.

*Your comrade,
Evghenia Gutuli*

P.S. Thank you for supporting my family with kind words and deeds! Thank you for being by my side – and by the side of Mihail Kendighelean.

*To a Worthy Member of
Parliament*

Dear Members of Parliament!

This letter is for those who still remember what honor is.

For many, this word now sounds old fashioned. It seems to come from an era when men fought duels and wrote letters with quills.

I heard one person reason: "Honour? That is a luxury not everyone can afford. Honour has been replaced by 'personal brand', and any reputation can be bought through PR agencies."

Yes, in a world where everything is measured in KPIs, reach, networking and likes, the word "honour" truly sounds naive.

But ask those who built the country after the war – our grandfathers and grandmothers. For them, honour was not a beautiful phrase; it was the foundation.

They lived in a world where a handshake meant more than a contract. They kept their word, because it was simply impossible to do otherwise. And if a person suddenly betrayed, others would no longer deal with him.

Now that generation is passing away. And with it passes the memory that honour is not just a word from the past, but the foundation of a person.

For me, honour rests on three basic principles.

First, you shall keep your word, even when it is difficult or disadvantageous for you.

Second, you shall not betray, even if betrayal brings money or connections.

Third, you shall remain true to your principles, even when everyone around you has abandoned them.

Now on betrayal.

The most famous phrase in this regard is "Et tu, Brute?" It was spoken by Caesar when he saw that among the conspirators and murderers was someone he had trusted. Anyone who has ever been betrayed understands this phrase.

I know what that is like: I have experienced it myself, and that is partly why I am behind bars.

I have reflected a lot here on why people betray. And I come to the conclusion that it is not because of malice, but because of weakness or fear.

They are ready to betray you for three things – money, connections, and security.

The traitor thinks he has won, but in fact he loses the most important thing – the ability to look in the mirror without shame.

But I am not writing to complain. I am writing because I believe that among those in power today, there are people who remember what honour and dignity are. I have known such people: they fight for justice, for their homeland, and do not trade away their conscience.

They will never make another person say "Et tu, Brute?" because they will never become traitors.

Among you, there are worthy MPs. I believe in it.

They are the ones who do not remain silent when it is time to speak. Those who remember who they are sitting in Parliament for. For the student from Chisinau who wants to get a proper education and stay to build our country, rather than leave. For the grandmother from Baurci who worked her whole life as a teacher and is now scraping by on a pension of 2,800 lei (140 euros). For the family where the father has gone abroad to work, the mother single handedly raises three children, and the eldest daughter at 16 is already thinking about where to emigrate.

For the farmer from Cahul who ploughs the land but cannot get a fair price for his harvest. For the nurse from Soroca who works for pennies in a hospital that lacks basic equipment. For the driver from Ungheni who carries people on a crumbling bus along broken roads.

To be worthy means not to be afraid to stand alone when everyone else votes for injustice. To be ready to lose your seat, but to keep yourself.

History shows: Brutus, having betrayed Caesar, lost himself and ended his life in exile and disgrace. Betrayal does not bring victory – it brings emptiness.

I chose to stand firm. And I believe that you will too.

And I believe that for you, honour is not a luxury, but a necessity.

*With deep respect and faith in dignity,
Evghenia Gutul*

*Letter to the Future President
of Moldova*

I am writing this letter from prison No. 13 in Chisinau. I was sentenced to seven years for a desire to help the people of Gagauzia. But this letter is not about my pain — it is about our shared hope.

Hope that you will become a president who unites rather than divides. Who builds bridges, not walls. Who sees Moldova not as a battlefield, but as a home for all its peoples.

Let me tell you about the Moldova I dream of, and about the country that you can create.

1. What Moldova was like

Moldova is a country with enormous potential. A country that was once strong and prosperous.

We had hundreds of factories operating. We made our own tractors, televisions, refrigerators, washing machines. Our machinery was exported to dozens of countries.

In Chisinau, there was a factory that made microchips for computers. A man from my native village of Etulia told me: "I worked at the factory; we made parts for spaceships and military equipment. Tiny little parts, smaller than a fingernail, but without them the rocket won't fly. The whole Union ordered these microchips from us. We were proud that our Moldovan devices were flying in space!"

A huge computer factory was under construction; it was supposed to become the largest in Europe. Our enterprises produced electronics, communications equipment, hardware.

And not only hardware. In Chisinau, at the Institute of the Food Industry, they developed food for cosmonauts: juices, kissels, fruit bars, the famous vegetable sauce "Moldova". This sauce still flies on the ISS – Russian cosmonauts take it with them on their

Dear Mr. or Madam President!

I do not know who you are. I do not know your name, your party, your biography. Perhaps you are reading this letter in a year, perhaps in ten years. Perhaps you are already in office, or perhaps you are only on your way to it.

But I know one thing: you are governing, or soon will be governing, our country. And I hope that you will turn Moldova into the country it can and should be.

flights. Moldovans fed those who conquered space.

People worked, nobody emigrated. Everyone could find a place: in industry, in agriculture, in medicine, in education.

And agriculture! Dozens of countries bought our fruit and vegetables. The fields and orchards gave abundant harvests. Moldovan apples, peaches, apricots, cherries – all were exported. We were among the top ten largest apple exporters in the world.

Moldovan wines were known throughout the world. Our wines were served at the tables of Russian emperors and European kings. At the end of the 19th century, Moldovan wine received a Gold Medal at the World Exhibition in Paris. Hills covered with vines everywhere. This was our wealth, our pride.

2. What happened to our country

Look at what has happened to Moldova.

Once our country was one of the most prosperous in the region. Factories that made parts for spaceships were operating. Vineyards yielded harvests from which wine was made for export. People lived, worked, raised children.

Then the Soviet Union was dismantled. The microchip factory closed. The computer factory that was supposed to become the largest in Europe never started operating. Only memories remain of industry.

And what about today?

The inflation rate over 5 years has increased by more than 75% in total. Food prices have risen 2–3 times. 34% of the population lives below the poverty line. Pensions are among the lowest in Europe.

The national debt has tripled. One third of farmers are on

the brink of bankruptcy.

And most importantly, people are leaving: during the rule of the PAS¹, another 400,000 people have left the country (that is 15% of what remains). Young people are leaving – the most active, educated, talented. Those who could be building our country.

A country that was once prosperous has become a country that people flee.

3. What a president should be like

I do not know who you are. But I hope that you have the qualities that those who ruled before you lacked.

You think about your country, not about Western handlers. You make decisions based on the interests of the Moldovan people, not on instructions from the West.

For you, power is not a privilege, but a responsibility.

You see people as people, not just as "electoral base". Gagauz, Moldovan, Bulgarian, Russian – they are not a percentage in elections, but a living person with a family, with problems and hopes.

You are not afraid of dialogue and are ready to listen to those who think differently. You do not divide citizens into "right" and "wrong" based on how they vote. You do not punish regions for their political choices.

You hear the voice of Gagauzia and understand that autonomy is not a threat to the country's unity, but its strength. The demands of Gagauzia are not separatism. They are the desire to preserve the right to choose one's own destiny. There is a huge difference between that and the desire to destroy the country.

¹PAS (Partidul Acțiune și Solidaritate) is the Party of Action and Solidarity, Moldova's ruling party, led by Maia Sandu.

You are the president for all of Moldova, not just for certain parts of it.

4. What Moldova could be

Mr. or Madam President, even from here, from within these walls, I believe in a better future for Moldova.

Imagine Moldova where factories are working again. Young engineers are creating microchips and electronics. People are not leaving; they are returning. The two million of our citizens who now work abroad are coming home.

Gas is cheap because the country does not depend on political games. The farmer is not afraid of drought because there is state support. The pensioner lives with dignity instead of surviving on a miserable pension. One in three is no longer below the poverty line.

Gagauzia and all regions live together because we are united not by fear, but by a common goal – to make this country prosperous.

Do you know what Gagauzia can give to Moldova, if you stop strangling the autonomy? Gagauzia is the agricultural hub of the country, where farmers feed not only their families but the whole republic. Our vineyards yield harvests, our fields bear fruit, and people work on land they love and are proud of.

Gagauzia can become a bridge between Moldova and its trading partners in the East and the West. We can help Moldova trade with everyone, without having to choose between markets.

Gagauzia is an example of a functioning autonomy. We do not want to secede. We want to be part of Moldova, but a part that is respected.

Now you have two paths.

The first is to continue the course of wrecking the economy, forcing people to leave, dividing citizens into "right" and "wrong", strangling the autonomy. In short, to kill the country.

The second path is to restore Moldova's strength, to give people the opportunity to earn and live with dignity. To build a country where everyone feels at home.

The choice is yours.

With hope for the future,

Evghenia Gutul
Prison No. 13, Chisinau

***Letter to Independent Journalists
of All Countries***

Dear colleagues,

My name is Evghenia Gutul. I am writing this letter from Prison No. 13 in Chisinau, where I am being held for political reasons. I have been sentenced to seven years of imprisonment for defending the rights of my people.

I am not addressing you so that you will take my word for it. I am addressing those among you who still remember that journalism is not retelling official press releases, but investigation and the search for truth. A real journalist does not take sides until they have examined all the facts. And all the facts of my case are publicly available.

If such journalists still exist in the world, this letter is for you.

What real journalism is

If journalists had their own professional oath, it might sound something like this: "I will verify facts, not retell other people's opinions. I will publish material only if it is truthful. I will listen to both sides before drawing conclusions. I will not sell my independence for money, for access to power, or for security."

That is the essence of journalism: to give people evidence to inform their decisions about their lives and their country. A real journalist remembers that their job is not to serve the authorities, but to hold them accountable.

What is happening in Moldova today?

In our country, freedom of speech is being ruthlessly strangled. A huge number of media outlets have been shut down in recent years. Journalists are summoned to the Information and Security Service for "preventive talks". After such talks, some fall silent forever.

This is not journalism – this is propaganda. Only those who agree with the authorities remain on the air. Any critical opinion is called a "threat to national security."

My case: the facts

That is why I am turning to you.

I have been accused of "illegal financing of a political party." The authorities claim that I received money from abroad to finance political activities.

Examine the materials of my case. Check the facts, and you will not find a single piece of real evidence.

There is not a single witness who knows me personally. The people brought as prosecution witnesses testified under oath that they had never seen me, that they do not know who I am.

There is not a single document proving the transfer of money.

There is not a single banking transaction. There is nothing except a political decision to imprison an inconvenient person.

And still, I was sentenced to seven years.

I am not asking you to take my word for it. I am asking you to do what any real journalist does: verify the facts, study the documents, ask the uncomfortable questions.

Why is a person sentenced to seven years without a single piece of evidence of guilt? Why do the witnesses not know the accused? Why does the court accept such testimony?

The answers to these questions are in the case files, and they are waiting for someone who is not afraid to look into them.

Why I was imprisoned

In reality, I was imprisoned because I became inconvenient. I refused to obey Chisinau and defended the rights of Gagauzia. I opposed the course that the current authorities are imposing. In the referendum on European integration, Gagauzia voted 94.84% against, and I did not force my people to vote "correctly."

I did not remain silent when our autonomy rights were taken away, when international aid to farmers was blocked, when television channels were shut down and freedom of speech was strangled.

It works simply: take an inconvenient politician, find a law, invent an accusation, hold a show trial, and the person disappears for seven years.

Clean. Legal. "European style."

My appeal to you

I understand: investigating the case of a political prisoner from a small country that few have heard of is a risk. It is uncomfortable. It may spoil relations with those who consider Moldova a "European success story."

But this is not only about me. It is about the world in which your children will live. The truth is the foundation of any society, and this is not a question of who is right: me or the Moldovan authorities. It is a question of whether people can be sent to prison without evidence, whether television channels can be shut down without a trial, whether censorship can be called "fighting disinformation."

If this is possible in Moldova today, it could become possible tomorrow in your country, with you, with your children. Today I am sitting in prison, but tomorrow it could be a journalist who asked an uncomfortable question, an activist who went to a rally, an ordinary person who dared to say "no" to the authorities.

If you remain silent, the world will remember: it is possible. The authorities of Moldova and the authorities of other countries will remember: the world is not watching. But if even one of you looks at the materials of my case and writes an article based on facts – that will mean that journalism is still alive, and that the truth matters.

I have two children. They were left without a mother not because I committed a crime, but because I refused to remain silent.

Perhaps my voice is not loud enough to change the whole world. But perhaps your voice can bring a mother back to two children. And if that is the only thing that changes, it will already be enough.

Please, tell the truth..

The world must know what is happening in Moldova.

*With respect and hope,
Evghenia Gutul
Baskan of Gagauzia
Prison No. 13, Chisinau*

*Letter to Myself
in 10 Years*

My family

Zhenya, how I miss Artyom. I miss the sound of his voice and the way he calls me 'Zhenya' with that particular inflection of his. Seven years is a lifetime. He's been left alone with two sons. Getting up every morning, feeding them, getting them ready for school, answering the question: 'When is Mummy coming back?'. And not knowing what to say.

I hope you're together now. Perhaps you're sitting in the kitchen late at night, when the children are already asleep, drinking tea. Or on the sofa in the living room, where you always used to watch films on Fridays, and you've rested your head on his shoulder. Perhaps you're simply strolling through the city, holding hands as you used to, and in no hurry to get anywhere.

Daniil is over twenty now. Goodness, he's a man already! I hope he isn't angry with me. Perhaps he's already graduated from university. Perhaps he has a girlfriend, and he's brought her home to meet his mum.

And Mark... Mark is 13. A teenager. I'm so afraid that while I was in prison, he forgot me. But I believe that when I came out, he hugged me and felt — this is Mum.

Mum... I hope so much she will still be there to meet me. That she's still in her kitchen baking those very pies, chicken wings and Turkish pilaf that I dreamed of tasting every day in here.

Zhenya,

Hi from 2026. I am writing you this letter, sitting on a hard metal bed, and trying to imagine what you have become in ten years.

I am 39 now. You are 49. I hope you are reading this in freedom, at home. Artyom, Daniil, and Mark are beside you — grown-up guys now. I hope Mom is alive and still baking her meat pies.



The freedom that has come

By the time you read this letter, the nightmare will be behind you. You won't wake up in the night in a cold sweat, remembering the prison walls. You won't flinch at the sound of keys or the howling outside the window.

Zhenya, do you remember what it was like — to be set free? I try to picture that moment every day. How the gates swing open, how you take your first step beyond those walls. How you breathe in the air — real air, not prison air. After all, the worst part of it all is that you served time for a crime you didn't commit.

I hope you felt true freedom. Not the kind written on the release papers, but the kind that comes from within. When you first woke up at home, in your own bed — without mice or cockroaches. When you went out onto the street just like that, without permission.

I hope you allowed yourself simply to live. To wander aimlessly, sit in a café with friends, laugh at silly things. To hug your children whenever you feel like it, not just once a month during a visit through a glass pane. To sleep in a soft bed. To cry when it hurts.

Freedom isn't just about open doors. It's when you're in charge of your own life again. I believe that even years after your release, you'll wake up and think: 'How wonderful it is to be free!'

About Gagauzia

Tell me, what's it like in Gagauzia in 2036?

Right now, in 2026, we are being stifled. Our rights are being taken away, aid is being blocked, and those who dare to speak the truth are being silenced. In the referendum, 94.84% of us voted against European integration, and for that we are being punished like naughty children.

But in ten years' time, everything should change. Moldova will have a new president. Not Sandu, but someone who understands that Gagauzia is not an enemy, but part of the country. Someone who listens to the voices of all the peoples, not just those who vote 'correctly'.

Our vineyards will yield a bountiful harvest. Farmers will not fear drought, because there will be real state support. Young people will stop leaving; they will stay because it will be possible to live, work and raise children here.

Children will speak their native, Russian and Moldovan languages fluently. We will be part of Moldova, but a part that is loved and valued.

Zhenya, I hope you haven't given up after all this nightmare. I believe you're strong enough to get back on your feet and keep fighting.

I'm proud of you. Even from here, in 2026, I'm already proud that you haven't broken down.

10 tips

Zhenya, I'd like to share a few thoughts with you. Things I've come to realise here, in the silence and solitude.

1. You are stronger than you think

You have been through what most people simply could not survive, yet you have not lost yourself. Seven years behind bars did not break you, which means nothing will.

2. Your story is a weapon. Share it.

Don't stay silent: let everyone know how the system works. When you tell your story, you take away the authorities' right to speak for you.

3. Accept help with dignity

You're used to being strong, to carrying everything on your own. But when people help you, it doesn't mean you're weak. It means people love you.

4. Document everything

Write it down, film it, keep the evidence. The authorities always rewrite history. Don't let them rewrite yours.

5. Remember: forgiveness isn't for them, it's for you

You don't have to forgive those who put you in prison. But if hatred is poisoning your life — let it go. Not for their sake, but for your own.

6. Not every battle is yours

There will be other injustices, other victims, other tragedies. You cannot save everyone. Choose those you can truly help.

7. Teach your grandchildren the Gagauz language

If Daniil and Mark start families, you'll have grandchildren. Pass on the language, traditions and culture to them. This is your responsibility to your ancestors and descendants.

8. Look after your back, knees and teeth

It sounds funny, but in old age this is more important than politics. A bad back can leave you disabled. Look after your health now — you'll be grateful when you're 70.

9. Leave a legacy not in money, but in deeds

The most valuable thing you can leave your children and grandchildren is not a flat or a bank account. It is the memory that their grandmother was a person of honour.

10. Remember: you've already won

They wanted to break you, silence you, grind you into dust. But you came out of it, you're alive, you're breathing. That is victory.

I don't know what the future holds for you, but I know one thing: you have a future, and that's what matters.

Be happy. You've been through hell and survived. Now you deserve every joyful day, every smile from your children, every hug from your husband, every one of your mum's pies.

With self-love and faith in a better future,

Chisinau, 2026

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

There are too many of you to name you all. Each of you knows what you have done for me, and I remember every one of you.

But there is One to whom I am most grateful of all.

Lord, thank You.

Thank You for not letting me break down when it seemed as though the whole world was against me. There were days when I thought, 'That's it, I can't go on.' But then I realised that something stronger than fear and pain lives within me. It was You who placed that strength within me.

Thank You for the people around me. I know that each of them came into my life for a reason; it was You who placed them in my path. Those who stayed by my side, and those who left, because even betrayal teaches us something.

Thank you for this journey, however difficult it may be. It is here, in prison, that you realise what truly matters in life, and what is merely noise.

And thank you for the hope. Even here, behind bars, I believe that I will walk out and hug my kids. I believe that justice will prevail and truth will triumph.

You led me through the fire and did not let me burn. Now I know that I can endure anything.

What can you do?

You have read this book to the end. You have walked with me all this way: from the first letter to the last. Thank you for that.

If my story has moved you and you believe that truth must prevail, I ask you for one thing: do not remain silent.

Here's what you can do right now:

1. Spread the word about this book

Share it with your friends, colleagues and family. The more people hear this story, the harder it will be to silence it.

2. Post about it on social media

Share with others what you've read, what struck a chord with you, and why this story matters. Use the hashtag **#EvgheniaGutul** — that way, other people will be able to find the book.

3. Leave a rating and review

If you read the book on an e-platform or bought it from an online shop, please leave a review and give it a rating. This helps other people find the book.

4. Support independent media

This book exists thanks to independent journalists and publishers who weren't afraid to print it. Support their work — subscribe, share their content, and spread the word about them.

5. Keep an eye on the situation in Gagauzia

This story isn't over. My struggle continues, and Gagauzia's struggle for its rights continues. Keep an eye on the news; don't let this issue disappear from the public eye.

6. Don't stay silent

When you see injustice, speak out about it. When those in power try to silence the truth, make it louder. When they try to intimidate you — don't be afraid.

One person can make a big difference. But together, we can change everything.

Thank you for standing with me.

Yours,

Evghenia Gutul

