



# Republic of Moldova Country Report



## Table of contents:

**Executive Summary** ..... 2  
 Historically and ethnically akin to neighboring Romania, Moldova has progressed unsteadily toward democracy since gaining its independence following the collapse of the Soviet Union. Historical disputes between Romania and Russia over Moldovan territories, particularly Transnistria, have contributed to prolonged ethnic and separatist conflict and a continued Russian military presence near Moldovan territory. *Read more.*

**Domestic Situation** ..... 3  
 Moldova, a landlocked nation slightly larger than the State of Maryland, is bordered by Ukraine and Romania. Formerly known as Moldavia, this largely Romanian-speaking country has been repeatedly divided and dominated by its larger neighbors: Turks and Russians in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century, Romania and Russia in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, and Romania and the USSR during the 20<sup>th</sup> century. *Read more.*

**Foreign Policy** ..... 7  
 After its initial interest in unifying with Romania after independence, Moldova has sought a moderate foreign policy and has built positive relations with its neighbors. Close ethnic, cultural, and linguistic affinity between Moldova and Romania have bolstered the two countries' close political ties. *Read more.*

**Relations with the U.S.** ..... 8  
 The United States recognized Moldovan independence on December 25, 1991 and opened its embassy in Chisinau in March 1992. The United States aids Moldova's transition to a more modern, transparent, and participatory state, one underpinned by the rule of law and a functioning market economy. *Read more.*

**Jewish Community** ..... 9  
 Beginning in the 15<sup>th</sup> century, Sephardic Jewish merchants established trade routes through modern-day Moldova between the Black and Baltic Seas. Jews settled in the region, especially in northern and central Bessarabia (as Moldova was then known). *Read more.*

## Executive summary:

*Historically and ethnically related to neighboring Romania, Moldova has progressed unsteadily toward democracy since gaining its independence following the Soviet Union's collapse. Historical disputes between Romania and Russia over Moldovan territories, particularly Transnistria, have contributed to prolonged ethnic and separatist conflict in the region, as well as a continued Russian military presence on Moldovan territory. These factors, together with corruption and economic hardship, have impeded reform.*

*The 2001 parliamentary elections officially reinstated Communist rule for the first time in a former Soviet state, reducing expectations for reform and straining relations with Moldova's closest ally, Romania. In the 2005 parliamentary elections, the Communist Party won a majority of the seats in the Parliament. President Vladimir Voronin, head of the Community Party, was re-elected on a pro-Western platform that emphasized reforms and integration with the EU. The April 2009 parliamentary elections caused massive peaceful protests. The resulting political crisis lasted until March 2012, when parliament elected Nicolae Timofti as president. Igor Dodon, the former President of Moldova, led the pro-Russian Party of Socialists, which is anti-EU and anti-NATO integration. Current President Maia Sandu is pro-EU and NATO marking a major shift from her predecessor.*

*Economic ties remain strong with Romania, Ukraine, and Russia, but a weak industrial infrastructure and high foreign debt render Moldova economically vulnerable and highly dependent on imports. Tensions with Russia over Transnistria and Moldova's pro-Western orientation have led to punitive Russian economic measures that have affected the Moldovan economy.*

*Moldova's Jewish population has deep roots in the area, but in recent years has experienced high levels of emigration. Local organizations actively cooperate with Israeli and American organizations. Jewish community relations with the Moldovan government are good. Recently, national and local authorities have done more to restore confiscated properties to the Jewish community and improve Holocaust education.*

*The Republic of Moldova has been at the forefront of the refugee crisis, instigated by Russia's invasion of Ukraine. With a population of approximately 4 million people, the 400,000 displaced persons that have entered Moldova is a 10% population increase. Estimates indicate that around 100,000 Ukrainians will stay in Moldova.*

*Reports indicated and a Russian general's statement fueled concerns that Russia would try and annex Transnistria. Doing so would allow Russia to expand its land bridge connecting Crimea.*

### Statistics:

**Population:** 4,020,000

(April 2022 est.)

**Size:** 33,843 sq. km

**Capital:** Chisinau  
(Kishinev)

**Major cities:** Chisinau,  
Balti, Bender, Tiraspol

**Jewish population:**

Approx. 20,500

**Head of State:**

President Maia Sandu

**Head of Government:**

Prime Minister Natalia  
Gavrilita

**Foreign Minister:**

Nicolae Popescu

**Ambassador to United**

**States:** Ursu Viorel

**U.S. Ambassador to**

**Moldova:** Kent D.

Logsdon

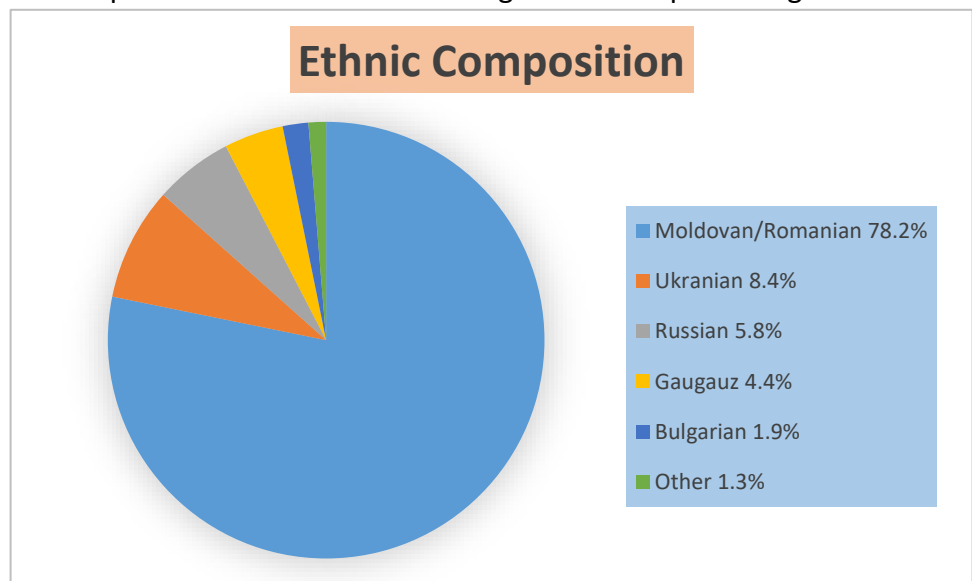
As Foreign Minister Popescu stated, “[Moldova] is most affected and the country that has the fewest resources to deal with the situation and fallout of the war.” Moldova is 100% reliable on Russian gas and prior to the war, imported many goods from Ukraine.

### Republic of Moldova:

Moldova, a landlocked nation slightly larger than the State of Maryland, is bordered by Ukraine and Romania. Formerly known as Moldavia, this largely Romanian-speaking country has been repeatedly divided and dominated by its larger neighbors: Turks and Russians in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century, Romania and Russia in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, and Romania and the USSR during the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The country was not officially called Moldova until its independence in 1991. In 1940, the Soviet Union forcibly annexed Bessarabia—the territory of modern Moldova—from Romania, giving Moldova its present borders. Moldova established independence under its new name on August 27, 1991, following the collapse of the Soviet Union.

### Political Environment:

Moldova’s politics continue to be dominated by the ramifications of the breakaway, Russian-dominated region of Transnistria, which has impeded Moldova’s economic growth and political goal of closer integration with the European Union. The Transnistria issue also colors Moldova’s foreign relations, given Moldova’s continued economic dependence on Russia, and the Kremlin’s continued support for Transnistria’s Russian-speaking separatist regime.

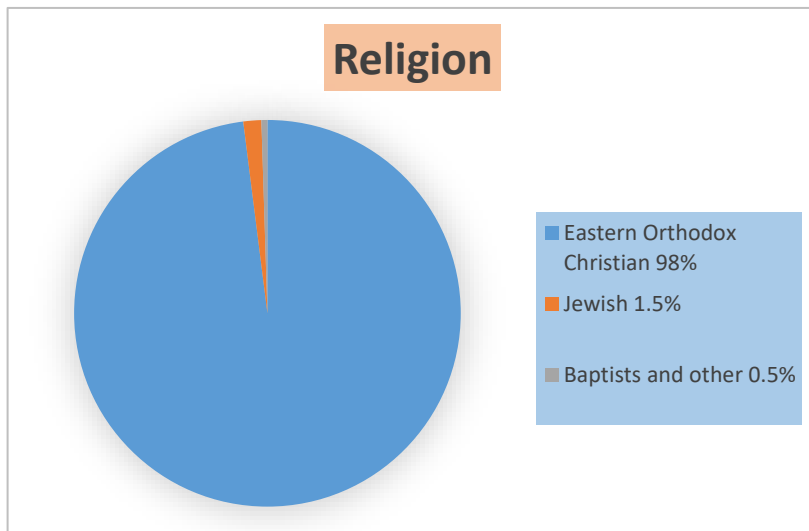


After independence, Moldova struggled for several years as a presidential republic with an ineffective parliament. It also lacked a new constitution and faced separatist unrest in the Turkish-speaking region of Gagauzia in the south and the Russian- and Ukrainian-speaking region of Transnistria in the east. A new constitution, adopted in 1994, granted Gagauzia autonomy, effectively ending its separatist demands. In 2000, the Parliament approved a constitutional amendment making Moldova a parliamentary republic.

The new constitution established a unicameral 101-member parliament (“Parlamentul”), a constitutional court, and a presidency. The President is directly elected by popular vote for a four-year term. The President then appoints a Prime Minister and a cabinet; appointments must be confirmed by parliament.

Moldova’s first president was former Communist leader Mircea Snegur, who ran unopposed as an independent in late 1991. He strongly promoted

Moldovan nationalism, opposed outright reunification with Romania, but favored close cultural and political ties with Bucharest. Snegur eventually distanced his country from Romania by changing the flag to be uniquely Moldovan and making Moldovan the official language.



Center-left independent candidate Petru Lucinschi won the 1996 presidential election, which was considered free and fair by international observers. Parliamentary elections in 1998 led to a majority centrist coalition taking power, although the Party of Communists of the Republic of Moldova (PCRM) won a plurality of votes. In December 2000, Lucinschi dissolved parliament after it failed to elect a new president. In the 2001 elections, internationally certified as free and fair, the PCRM won a majority of seats. The new parliament elected PCRM leader Vladimir Voronin to succeed Lucinschi as president. President Voronin worked to reduce poverty by increasing social spending and pursued privatization of state-owned enterprises.

In the run-up to the March 2005 Presidential and Parliamentary election, the PCRM dramatically liberalized its platform and repositioned itself as Moldova’s leading pro-Europe party. The PCRM won 46% of the vote. Voronin was reelected as president in April 2005, with aid from former opposition parties, after he promised to implement reforms and pursue further Euro-integration.

In the 2009 parliamentary elections, the Communist Party won 60 of 101 parliamentary seats. However, massive peaceful protests, which became riots, helped to influence the decision of the three opposition parties to not cooperate with the Communist Party, leading to new parliamentary elections in July 2009, which drew 1.6 million voters. The opposition parties gained 53 seats, but the Communist Party retained control of the government. Following the election, the four former opposition parties that gained the majority of seats in the Moldovan Parliament formed the new Alliance for European Integration coalition.

Presidential elections were held in December 2011. However, because numerous voting procedures violations, the Constitutional Court of Moldova annulled the results. In March 2012 parliament elected Nicolae Timofti as president, putting an end to a political crisis. The next parliamentary elections took place in November 2014, with a new increased threshold for party participation. However, it did not prevent an escalation of the political crisis, and five government changes between 2014 and 2016.

The political establishment has been shaken since a 2014 corruption scandal in which \$1 billion, nearly 13% of GDP, disappeared from banks in Moldova. The missing funds led to a financial crisis, street protests, and the arrest of former Prime Minister Vlad Filat. His successor lost a vote of confidence. The political crisis intensified at the end of 2015, with united pro-European Union and pro-Russian parties protesting corruption and political mismanagement.

Following a period of political instability and massive public protests, a new government led by Prime Minister Pavel Filip was established in January 2016.

In December 2016, Igor Dodon, leader of the Party of Socialists, won Moldova's first direct presidential election, defeating Maia Sandu, leader of the pro-EU Party of Action and Solidarity. President Dodon favored close relations with the Kremlin and supported Russia's annexation of Crimea in 2014. Dodon worked to improve Moldova's relationship with Israel. After visiting the country in December 2018, he reportedly considered moving the Moldova's embassy to Jerusalem.

In February 2019, Moldova held its most recent parliamentary election. Although no party won an outright majority of seats, President Dodon's Party of Socialists secured a plurality with thirty-five seats, followed by the center-left Democratic Party with 30. If no ruling coalition is formed, a new election will be held in the summer of 2019.

In the 2020 presidential election, in a rematch between Dodon and Sandu, challenger Maia Sandu won and became the first female president of Moldova. She ran under an agenda to strengthen ties with the EU, eliminate corruption, and promote pro-Western values.

### **Transnistria (aka Transdniester, Transdnistria, Pridnestrovye):**

On September 2, 1990, Transnistria, the part of Moldova that lies east of the Dniester River and contains a large Russian and Ukrainian population, unilaterally declared its independence from Chisinau (Kishinev) and proclaimed its largest city, Tiraspol, as its capital. Many in Transnistria feared the rise of Moldovan nationalism and the country's expected unification with Romania. The international community and Moldova have never recognized Transnistria as independent.

Confrontations between Moldovan authorities and the Transnistrian separatists gradually escalated in the early 1990s, with locally stationed Russian military units and armed volunteers from Russia and Ukraine supporting the separatists. A brief war broke out in early 1992, in which hundreds were killed and thousands displaced, before a ceasefire was signed in July 1992. Moldova was effectively divided, with Transnistria outside Chisinau's control.

Relations between Chisinau and Tiraspol remain tense and both sides are skeptical of each other. Ongoing border disputes have resulted in low-level confrontations between Moldovan and Transnistrian forces in recent years.

Transnistria is ruled by a separatist government calling itself the Pridnestrovian Moldavian Republic (PMR) and is backed



politically and militarily by Russia. The Transnistrian authorities have a poor human rights record and a history of aggression and abuse against the media, minority religious groups, and non-Russian speakers. Despite its self-proclaimed current autonomy, Transnistria is not recognized by any other state. President Igor Smirnov (a Russian-born Russian citizen) served as the head of PMR from 1990 until 2011.

In 1997, Moldova and Transnistria agreed to remain one country, and in 1998 Russia consented to reduce its forces in Transnistria. Negotiations with the OSCE at the 1999 Istanbul Summit resulted in a December 2001 deadline for the evacuation of the remaining Russian troops and arsenal. After a succession of partial and postponed withdrawals, Russia stated in January 2003 that it would maintain its military presence in the region for “security” purposes.

In 2005, the EU and the United States joined negotiations as observers, creating the 5+2 format. The multilateral negotiations collapsed in 2006 and were dormant for the next several years. Official negotiations resumed in November 2011.

In the December 2011 presidential elections in Transnistria, former parliament speaker Yevgeny Shevchuk defeated longtime incumbent Smirnov and Russian-backed candidate Anatoly Kaminsky. Shevchuk pledged to reduce barriers to trade and travel with Moldova while promoting Transnistria’s independence and close ties to Russia.

Economically, Transnistria is important to Moldova’s economy. More heavily industrialized than the rest of Moldova, it comprises 40% of Moldova’s GDP and produces 90% of its electricity. The Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), Russia, and Ukraine have attempted to mediate a settlement between Moldova and the PMR. Progress toward a resolution of the conflict has been slow.

After the annexation of Crimea and Russian-backed separatist conflict in Ukraine’s southeast, the Supreme Council of the unrecognized Transnistrian Moldovan Republic appealed to Russian President Vladimir Putin for recognition as a sovereign and independent state, with plans to accede to the Russian Federation. In May 2014, then-Deputy Prime Minister of the Russian Federation and special representative of the Russian Federation on Transnistria Dmitry Rogozin stated that due to the fighting between pro-Russian forces and pro-Ukrainian government units in eastern Ukraine, Russia is not yet ready to give a concrete response concerning the appeal.

On April 26, 2022, there were blast reportedly hit a radio center and a security headquarters. Whether the explosions are a false flag attack by Russia has not been determined yet. The United States is monitoring the report and gathering information.

### **Economic Situation:**

Moldova remains one of Europe’s poorest countries, with one of the lowest GDPs per capita, despite recent progress. Never heavily industrialized, Moldova’s economy is based on agriculture and food processing. It was seriously affected by the Soviet breakup, and the Transnistrian war. Moldova continues to work with the IMF and World Bank to promote agricultural growth and reduce poverty.

After a decade of economic contraction beginning in 2000, Moldova began to see yearly GDP growth of 6% due to economic reforms, increased agricultural production, and rising remittances from the many

Moldovans working abroad. However, Moldova’s continuing near-total dependence on outside sources for industrial imports and energy, and the persistence of the separatist regime in Transnistria continues to impede economic growth.

Because Moldova’s climate is favorable to agriculture with plenty of available farmland, its main exports are agricultural (fruits, vegetables, wine, meat, and tobacco). With few natural resources, Moldova must import almost all its energy supplies from Russia and Ukraine. The Moldovan economy is extremely vulnerable to changing fuel prices, the impact of poor weather on agriculture, and the skepticism of foreign investors.

Moldova signed an Association Agreement and a Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Agreement with the EU during fall 2014, connecting Moldovan products to the world’s largest market. A \$1 billion asset-stripping heist of Moldovan banks in late 2014 delivered a significant shock to the economy in 2015; a subsequent bank bailout increased inflationary pressures and contributed to the depreciation of the leu. Moldova’s growth has also been hampered by endemic corruption, bureaucratic impediments, a Russian import ban on Moldova’s agricultural products, and divisions over closer integration with the European Union versus Russia.

### **Religious policy:**

The Constitution provides for freedom of religion, and the Government generally respects this right in practice; however, the 1992 Law on Religions, which codifies religious freedoms, contains restrictions that inhibit the activities of unregistered religious groups. The law bans unregistered religious entities from engaging in political activity, describes the procedures for registering religious groups, and prohibits “abusive proselytism.” Although the law was amended in 2002, many of the restrictions remain in place.

**Currency:** 18.43 Leu = \$1  
(April 2022)

**GDP:** \$11.91 billion (2020)  
**GDP per capita:** \$4547 (2022)

Each person is guaranteed the right to profess his or her religious beliefs in his or her own way. The 1992 law also protects the confidentiality of the confessional, allows denominations to establish associations and foundations, and states that government may not interfere in the religious activities of denominations.

Transnistrian authorities also enforce policies that restrict religious freedom, which negatively affects religious minority groups.

### **Foreign Policy:**

After its initial interest in unifying with Romania, Moldova has sought a moderate foreign policy and has built positive relations with its neighbors. Close ethnic, cultural, and linguistic affinity between Moldova and Romania have bolstered the two countries’ close political ties.

Relations with Ukraine have been strained over the Transnistrian-Ukrainian border, which is widely considered a portal for illegal weapons, narcotics, and human trafficking. Moldova remains heavily dependent on Ukrainian energy imports.



Moldova also remains heavily dependent on trade with Russia, despite friction over Russia's support of Transnistria. Moldova's election of a Communist government in late 2001 strengthened bilateral relations. A December 2001 law mandated Russian language education in all universities and schools, beginning in the second grade. The move prompted broad domestic protests and harsh Romanian criticism. Although Moldova's Ukrainian and Russian minorities are concentrated in Transnistria, Russian is widely spoken in Moldova's cities.

In 2013, then-Deputy Prime Minister of Russia Dmitry Rogozin has stated that Russia would reconsider its close relationship with Moldova if it signed an Association Agreement with the EU, because of concerns about Moldova's political and military neutrality.

Moldova has sought to participate in multilateral frameworks for regional cooperation. It is a founding member of GUAM (Georgia, Ukraine, Azerbaijan, Moldova), a regional alliance that works to strengthen the independence of post-Soviet states. Moldova was the first Newly Independent State in the Council of Europe. It has membership in the CIS (Commonwealth of Independent States), an eleven-member security organization of post-Soviet successor states. Moldova is a member of NATO's Partnership for Peace and Euro-Atlantic Partnership Council and is a signatory to the Conventional Forces in Europe (CFE) Treaty. Moldova is also a World Trade Organization member and works closely with the IMF and the World Bank.

In 1998, Moldova entered into a Partnership and Cooperation Agreement with the EU, reinforced by a Membership Action Plan in February 2005, which outlines specific steps necessary for EU integration. The current government administration has put a greater emphasis on integration into the EU.

In April 2014 Moldovan citizens were granted visa-free entry to the 26 Schengen Area countries, as well as Bulgaria, Croatia, Cyprus, and Romania.

The Association Agreements signed by Moldova and Georgia with the European Union in June 2014 are meant to lay the foundations of reforms that will strengthen democracy, the rule of law, and market economy, though the country's recent pro-Russian governments have been slow to implement them.

In April 2017, Moldova gained Observer Status in the Russian-led Eurasian Economic Union.

In June 2019, Nicolae Popescu was appointed the Minister of Foreign Affairs.

Since 1992, Moldova has received 1.7 billion dollars from the United States. The United States aid is designated for infrastructure, agriculture, and healthcare.

Moldova is represented in many intergovernmental organizations such as, the UN, OSCE, and the World Bank.

### **Relations with Israel:**



Moldova and Israel enjoy positive bilateral relations. Israel was among the first nations to recognize Moldova's independence. Moldova opened its Embassy in Tel Aviv in 1995, and Israel operates a consulate in Chisinau.

President Petru Lucinschi made an official visit to Israel in 1999. In April 2003, Israeli Ambassador Anna Azari attended a ceremony in Chisinau where President Voronin unveiled a memorial commemorating the Kishinev (Chisinau) pogrom on the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the massacre. In July 2003, Israeli President Moshe Katsav visited Chisinau and met with President Voronin. Israel and Moldova have established an inter-governmental commission to focus on bilateral economic relations.

One of Israel's most famous former Moldovans is Avigdor Lieberman, head of the Yisrael Beiteinu party, who immigrated to Israel from the USSR in 1978. Lieberman has made several visits to Moldova.

In May 2011, Prime Minister Vladimir Filat met with Israeli Ambassador Oren David to discuss improving trade and economic exchanges, and Israeli investment in the Moldovan economy. In May 2012, Filat became the first Moldovan prime minister to visit Israel.

In September 2014, Israel abolished its visa regime for Moldovan citizens. The Republic of Moldova had abolished the visa regime for Israeli citizens in 2010.

In March 2018, Foreign Minister Ulianovschi welcomed a deepening of Moldovan-Israeli relations following a series of bilateral meetings with his counterpart and bilateral visits by both countries' prime ministers.

Following his December 2018 trip to Israel, President Dodon reportedly stated that he is considering moving the country's embassy to Jerusalem.

In June 2019, the Moldovan Government said they will remove their embassy in Israel to Jerusalem. But a couple of weeks, newly appointed Prime Minister Maia Sandu refuted this information.

An estimated 75,000 Moldovan Jews currently reside in Israel.

Moldova and Israel have been working closely to help Jews fleeing the war in Ukraine and many who want to emigrate to Israel. As of April 15, 2022, around 2,500 Ukrainian Jews in temporarily in Moldova emigrated to Israel.

### **Relations with the United States:**

The United States recognized the independence of Moldova on December 25, 1991, and opened its embassy in Chisinau in March 1992.

The United States aids Moldova's transition to a more modern, transparent, and participatory state, one underpinned by the rule of law and a functioning market economy.

After President Voronin visited President Bush in December 2002, the two issued a joint statement supporting peace in Transnistria and a peaceful withdrawal of Russian troops from the region. The

United States has participated in negotiations with Moldova, the OSCE, and Russia over the fate of Transnistria.

In 2001, in conjunction with the U.S. Commission for the Preservation of America's Heritage Abroad, the Moldovan and U.S. governments signed a Declaration of Cooperation to establish a framework for the preservation of cultural sites.

In 2010, the United States and Moldova signed a \$262 million, 5-year Millennium Challenge Corporation compact for economic development and investment projects in irrigation infrastructure, high-value agricultural production, and road rehabilitation. In January 2010, Prime Minister Vladimir Filat visited Washington, D.C.

In 2011, U.S. Vice President Joe Biden visited Moldova to show support for its government's pro-Western aspirations. Biden praised government efforts to end a protracted political and economic crisis and commended its efforts to crack down on sex trafficking. In December 2012, Congress overwhelmingly voted in support of the measure to graduate Moldova from the Jackson-Vanik Amendment and grant Moldova permanent normal trade relations status (PNTR).

In March 2014, U.S. President Barack Obama and Vice President Joseph Biden received Moldovan Prime Minister Iurie Leanca at the White House. Visiting Moldova later that month, U.S. Assistant Secretary of State Victoria Nuland declared that U.S.-Moldova relations "have never been stronger."

In May 2014, a U.S. Senate delegation representing various committees, including Armed Forces, Foreign Affairs, and Trade, visited Chisinau and conducted meetings with the Moldova Cabinet of Ministers. Measures to increase American investments in the Moldovan economy, the European integration of Moldova, and need to quickly stabilize the situation in the region were discussed.

In May 2014, Liberal Democratic Party leader (PLDM) Vlad Filat visited the U.S. and met with U.S. Senator John McCain and other high ranking U.S. officials. In 2015, the Moldovan State Secretary of the Ministry of Defense Aurel Fondos traveled to the United States to participate in a bi-annual bilateral conference on fighting corruption.

In October 2018, the Moldovan Parliament overrode a veto by President Igor Dodon, and approved a transfer of land in Chisinau for a new U.S. embassy.

### **Jewish Community:**

Beginning in the 15<sup>th</sup> century, Sephardic Jewish merchants established trade routes through modern-day Moldova between the Black and Baltic Seas. Jews settled in the region, especially in northern and central Bessarabia (as Moldova was then known). In 1812, when the Russian Empire annexed Bessarabia from the Ottoman Turks, an estimated 2,000 Jews lived in the area.

The Jewish population grew there even as ethnic tensions mounted. Tsarist authorities either encouraged or allowed the local population to attack the Jews, resulting in two infamous massacres ("pogroms") of Moldovan Jews in 1903 and 1905. Spurred by a blood libel in a national newspaper, on

April 6-7, 1903, 49 Jews were killed, 500 were wounded and hundreds of Jewish homes and businesses were severely damaged in attacks. These attacks became known as the Kishinev Pogrom.

News of the event reverberated throughout Europe and North America, and thousands of Jews emigrated from the Russian Empire. The United States reacted with public condemnations and trade restrictions against Tsarist Russia. Massacres during the 1905 Russian Revolution resulted in the death of hundreds of more Jews across Moldova, culminating in the second Kishinev Pogrom of October 1905, during which local Jews formed self-defense units to protect their communities.

By 1920, the Jewish population in Moldova numbered about 267,000. After the German-led invasion of the Soviet Union in 1941, nearly 100,000 Jews died in mass shootings, deportations, ghettos, and camps on Bessarabian and Ukrainian territory. A Holocaust memorial is prominently located near the national government offices in Chisinau.

While some Moldovans are believed to have collaborated with German and Romanian occupiers, Israel has recognized 53 Moldovans as “Righteous Among the Nations” for risking their lives to save Jews during the Holocaust.

Today, approximately 20,500 Jews live in Moldova. Over ten thousand Jews live in Chisinau, 2,500-3,000 in and around the city of Beltsy, and over 2,000 in Tiraspol. Substantial communities also exist in Bender, Soroki, Rybnitsa and Orhei, with smaller communities in at least 45 villages across Moldova.

The Jewish population of Moldova has decreased substantially since independence due to its high percentage of elderly Jews (an estimated one-quarter to one-half of the community) and high levels of emigration. Almost 50,000 Jews from Moldova made aliyah between 1989 and 2001. Thousands of Transnistria’s estimated 12,000 Jews left Moldova after the outbreak of hostilities in 1991, with most making aliyah.

The Moldovan Association of Jewish Organizations and Communities is the primary umbrella for the Jewish community. It runs programs such as the Moldova-Israel Friendship Association, the Moldova-Israel Foreign Trade Association, the Jewish Museum, and the monthly Nash Golos (“Our Voice”) Jewish newspaper.

In April 2018, the Moldovan Jewish community, in coordination with the ‘Never Again’ Association, launched a new awareness campaign to highlight the Chisinau Pogrom on its 115<sup>th</sup> anniversary.

Chabad Lubavitch maintains synagogues in Chisinau and Tiraspol and is active throughout Moldova. Chabad Rabbi Yosef Abelsky is Chief Rabbi of Kishinev and Moldova. The movement operates the 250-student Jewish School #15, a rabbinical school, and two preschools. In addition, Chabad has several welfare and supplementary education programs and publishes a monthly newspaper.

Rabbi Yehoshua Kanevsky operates a yeshiva high school. Jewish schools are funded in part by the Moldovan government and the Israeli Cultural Center. Eight Jewish Sunday schools operate throughout Moldova. A branch of Israel’s Open University is based in the capital, while Chisinau State University and the Academy of Sciences each have Jewish Studies departments. Jewish programs are included in Moldovan university curricula, though a shortage of teachers and funding threatens these programs.

An Israeli Embassy Cultural Center operates in Chisinau, and the Israeli Government and Moldovan Education Ministry jointly run a school to prepare children for aliyah. JAFI also has a presence and runs Nesharim summer camps and winter seminars on Jewish history and tradition.

Since 2000, the Greensboro, North Carolina Jewish Federation has had a partnership with the Beltsy Jewish community, initiating a number of joint projects, including the construction of a Jewish Community Center, and restoration and preservation of the Beltsy Jewish cemetery.

International organizations have provided significant aid to Moldovan Jewry. In addition to funding renovation of the Community Center, the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee (JDC) distributes medicine, clothing and educational materials to the community, and funds the Hesed Chana welfare center. JDC has launched a major program to feed low-income children and has created a Jewish Campus in Chisinau, which houses the JCC, a synagogue, and a Holocaust museum.

In June 2012, Limmud FSU for the first time held a conference in Chisinau. Prime Minister Filat met with the Limmud FSU delegation and in a speech emphasized Moldova's commitment to deepening ties with Israel. In July 2017, Limmud FSU Moldova, a dynamic and pluralistic Jewish festival of culture, creativity, and learning, hosted a day-long festival to commemorate the life of Elie Wiesel.

In January 2015, Moldova's Foreign Ministry partnered with the Jewish community and the Bureau of Interethnic Relations to organize a high-level international conference commemorating the 70<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the liberation of the Auschwitz-Birkenau concentration camps. In November 2015, the parliament adopted a resolution designating January 27 as Moldova's Holocaust Remembrance Day.

In July 2016, the Moldovan parliament adopted a declaration acknowledging the Final Report of the Wiesel International Commission for the Study of the Holocaust. The Report discussed the number of Moldovan Jews murdered and the role of local collaborators in the Holocaust. In January 2017, the parliament voted to implement the Report's recommendations, which included improving Holocaust education nationwide.

In October 2018, Prime Minister Pavel Filip's office announced plans to construct a museum of Jewish history that will be dedicated to the memory of the Holocaust. The project will be paired with efforts to restore the main Jewish cemetery in Chisinau. In January 2019, the Moldovan government created a fund for the repair of a ruined funeral synagogue, the only one of its kind in the country.

During Holocaust Remembrance Day on January 27, 2019, the Moldovan government hosted events, with participation from the local Jewish community, parliamentarians, and representatives from the Israeli Knesset and U.S. Commission for the Preservation of American Heritage Abroad. Speakers at parliament highlighted the role of Moldova's "Righteous Among the Nations." Members of the government then traveled to the Jewish cemetery in Chisinau. Later, parliament held a roundtable with President of the Moldovan Jewish community Alexandr Bilinkis. The meeting culminated with a resolution outlining the government's commitment to improve Holocaust awareness.

Also in January 2019, the Moldovan government adopted the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance's definition of anti-Semitism. Moldova holds "Observer" status in the alliance.

During a meeting with NCSEJ in February 2019, Moldovan Foreign Minister Tudor Ulianoschi and Ambassador to the United States Christina Balan discussed their government's recent successful efforts to restore the Jewish cemetery at Kishinev as a national monument. The Foreign Minister noted that the government completely subsidized the project, which involved clearing woods and installing fences around the site. Ambassador Balan further explained that the government intends to fully refurbish the cemetery and will complete the project in several months.

In August 2019, the Jewish community of Chisinau reopened a synagogue in its former home, a building seized by Soviet authorities nearly 80 years ago.

The Moldovan Jewish community is helping support Ukrainian refugees. The JCC in Chisinau has been a gathering hub for Jews escaping the war.

### **Anti-Semitism:**

Moldova has a tragic history of virulent anti-Semitism, including Tsarist-era pogroms and local collaboration in the Holocaust. While today no policy of anti-Semitism exists at the state level and the government has condemned anti-Semitism in various speeches, popular anti-Semitism still exists.

In 2002, two Moldovan teenagers desecrated a Jewish cemetery in Chisinau and skinheads firebombed a Tiraspol synagogue twice: both groups were later arrested by the police. In 2003, a local radio station suspended a call-in show that had become known for expression of anti-Semitic views. In March 2004, more than 70 tombstones were desecrated in the Jewish cemetery in Tiraspol.

In May 2004 vandals attempted to set the Tiraspol synagogue on fire by throwing a Molotov cocktail near a local gas supply. The attack failed when passers-by extinguished the fire. A June 2005 article in a Chisinau newspaper asserted that Moldovan Jews were themselves to blame for the massacres during the German occupation due to their alleged pro-Soviet sympathies and alleged "terrorist" acts against Romanian troops. In April, May, and November of 2005, Jewish cemeteries in Chisinau and Soroki were vandalized.

In January 2007, protesters, including Jewish activists, forced the relocation of a construction project from the site of an old Jewish cemetery in Chisinau that had exposed human bones. In March 2007, five youths were detained in connection with the vandalism of a Jewish cemetery in Chisinau. The cemetery, with only one municipal guard to protect it, has suffered repeated vandalism in the past. In September 2008, anti-Semitic graffiti was painted on the Holocaust Memorial in Bendery.

In December 2009, approximately 200 fundamentalist Orthodox Christians chanted anti-Semitic slogans and toppled a public menorah. Neither police nor onlookers intervened as the large metal menorah was torn down. The orthodox priest who led the attack was eventually charged with a misdemeanor. In March 2011, the Memorial Monument erected on the spot on of the Chisinau Ghetto was desecrated.

In 2012, a major incident of concern for Jewish community occurred in Transnistria, home of an estimated 2,000 Jews. A Transnistria neo-Nazi group posted a picture showing a monument to Holocaust victims vandalized with swastikas and the slogan "Congratulations on the Holocaust."

Two anti-Semitic desecrations at the memorial to Holocaust victims and at the Jewish cemetery in Chisinau occurred during 2013. In January 2013, the Union of Moldovan Authors and the Moldovan government were highly criticized for nominating writer Paul Goma, some of whose publications justify and deny the Holocaust, for the Nobel Prize in Literature.

In October 2015, swastikas and anti-Semitic writings were drawn on the walls of Jewish college in Chisinau.

In March 2016, a synagogue in the town of Orhei was attacked. The new inner doors of the synagogue were destroyed, and menorah candelabras that were attached to the walls were stolen. In April 2016, unknown persons damaged several dozen graves in a Jewish cemetery in Soroki.

Moldova became a signatory to the Terezin Declaration in 2009, thereby committing the country to compensating victims of Nazi persecution for loss of property. The Moldovan government, however, has failed to properly fund the commission established to address claims. In 2013, the U.S. State Department reported that Moldovan authorities had allocated 20 million leu (USD 1.65 million) for compensation. It is unclear how many individuals ultimately received compensation.

In November 2018, unidentified individuals vandalized a Jewish cemetery in the country's capital. Local authorities found swastikas painted on a headstone. Nearby residents noted that this was not the first time that this type of attack had occurred at the cemetery.

In April 2019, at least 80 headstones were smashed during restoration work on Chisinau's old Jewish cemetery.