

## **Romanian expats return home for major anti-government protest, clash with police**

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**Many Romanians who left their homeland because of corruption, low wages and lack of opportunities returned to rally for the government's resignation. Police responded to the protests with a water cannon and tear gas.**

Hundreds of Romanian expatriates have driven across Europe to join the compatriots in an anti-government protest that local media said drew between 50,000 and 80,000 people on Friday.

The demonstrators, who gathered outside the government offices in Bucharest's Victoriei Square, called for the country's leaders to resign over corruption allegations and early elections. Police used a water cannon and tear gas to disperse demonstrators, who were calling for the government to resign. Some 250 people required medical attention.

Romanian President Klaus Iohannis, a critic of the government, said he "firmly condemned the brutal intervention of riot police," which he called a disproportionate reaction to mostly peaceful protests.

Romania's ruling Social Democratic Party (PSD) has been targeting the judiciary following a string of high-profile graft investigations by the country's anti-corruption agency (DNA) and convictions of senior PSD officials. The left-wing party tried to decriminalize several corruption offenses through an emergency decree last year, however, following anti-government street protests, the PSD was forced to withdraw the decree.

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### **After Romania's government bows, protesters call for resignations**

Call for resignation

In February, the Romanian government bowed to protesters' demands, saying it would repeal legislation decriminalizing certain forms of corruption, but demonstrators said the move is not enough. "Now we're asking for the government to resign," Mihai Oprica, 31, an IT manager pictured above. "[These protests] can stop if they cooperate. If not, we will continue coming out every day."

Since their election victory in December 2016, Romanians have regularly protested moves by the PSD and its junior, liberal, partner ALDE to [weaken the DNA's fight against corruption](#).

Hundreds of thousands of Romanians have demanded a law that would ban from office people convicted of corruption.

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### **Mass protests in Romania**

2017 rallies in the capital

Demonstrators joined several rallies in the capital Bucharest in February last year to protest against the government for decriminalizing certain corruption offences. The country's left-wing government adopted an emergency law to make abuse of power punishable only when it concerns sums that exceed 200,000 lei (44,000 euros)

### **Creative protesting**

In July, police in Romania seized the number plates from a man who registered a car in Sweden with letters featuring a derogatory phrase aimed at Romania's ruling Social Democratic Party (PSD). Razvan Stefanescu's personalized plates read "MUIEPSD" which translates as F\*\*\*PSD" — a slogan often used at anti-government protests. Images of his vehicle went viral on social media.

kw/sms (AP, AFP)

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