

**PROVOCATIVE ANTI-MINORITY STATEMENT
UNDERMINES DEMOCRACY IN ROMANIA**

We the undersigned believe that an indispensable component of stability and security in Central and Eastern Europe is a demonstrable and sustained commitment to democracy, including the respect for the rule of law and the rights of national and religious minorities. Tragically during most of the last century these ideals were frequently sacrificed. As much as we welcome newly-elected President Traian Basescu's pledge to implement reforms in Romania, we are appalled by former President Ion Iliescu's shocking statement on March 25 blaming Hungarians of Tirgu Mures (Marosvasarhely) for the violence in March 1990 when ethnic Romanians brought in by trucks viciously attacked ethnic Hungarians who were seeking rights denied them by the dictator Ceausescu. As noted by Andrei Codrescu in his acclaimed book, "The Hole in the Flag," the "trucks and the weapons resembled very much the trucks and weapons with which Iliescu's 'workers' had gone to work on the [pro-democracy] demonstrators of Bucharest. It was no coincidence." We are confident that all democratic-minded Romanians will reject former President Iliescu's blatant attempt to rewrite history and we urge them to speak out against such revisionism that only serves to foment ethnic hatred and intolerance and thereby undermines genuine democracy in Romania.

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