

A young man with dark hair, wearing a light-colored t-shirt and dark pants, sits atop a white horse with large black patches. The horse has a red tassel on its bridle. They are in a dusty, open area with makeshift buildings and trash in the background under a clear blue sky.

MUGUR VĂRZARIU

# TIMELINE - BAIIA MARE

a timeline of my 15 years social and human rights work in Baia Mare





In 2011, I documented  
the construction of the  
segregation wall in Baia  
Mare, from July to  
September.

# THE WALL











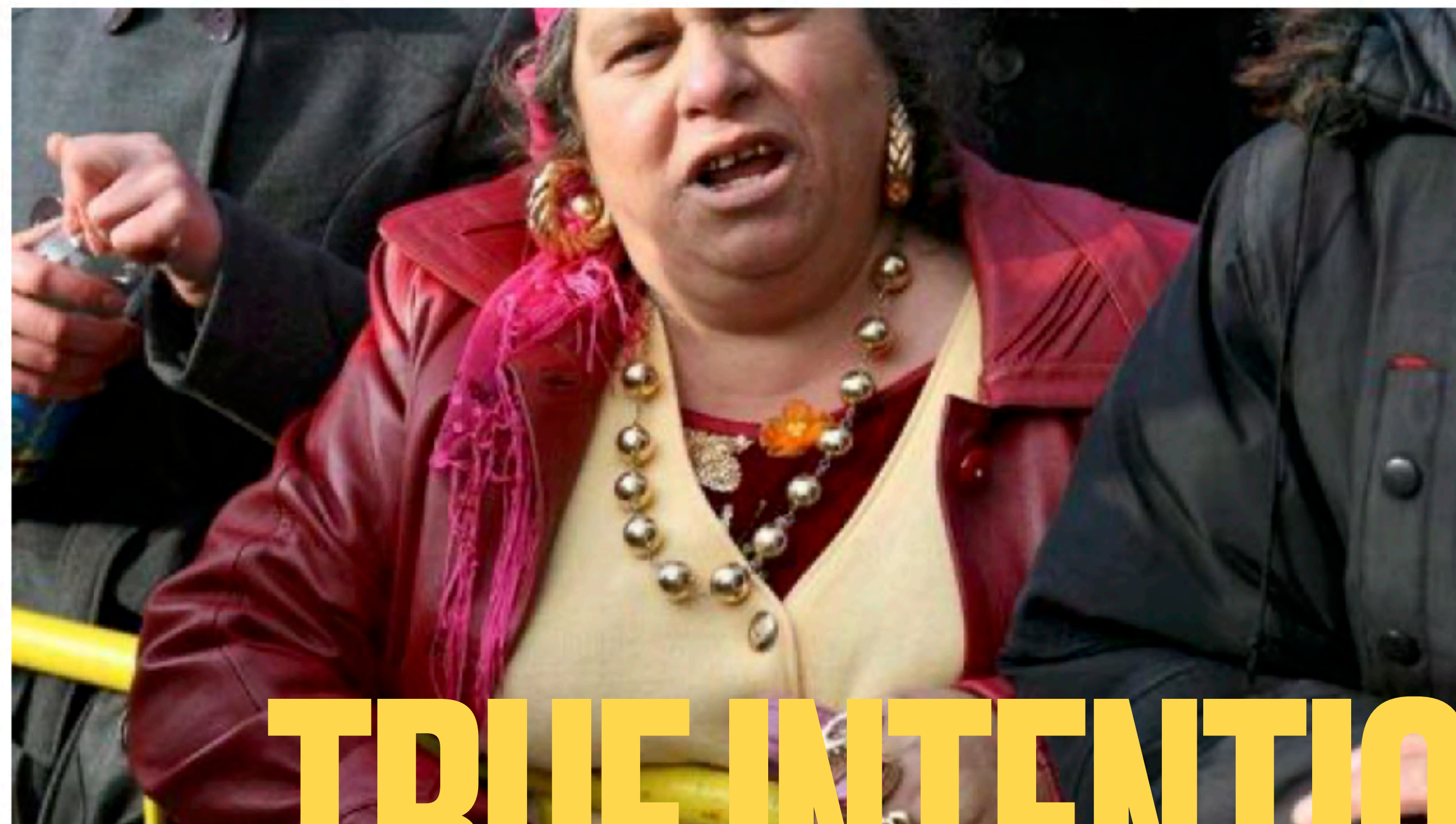






# Primăria Baia Mare îngrădește un bloc în care locuiesc romi. "Gardul îi va proteja pe ceilalți cetățeni", spune primarul

de [Gabriela Antoniu](#) | 30 Iun 2011 • 06:49



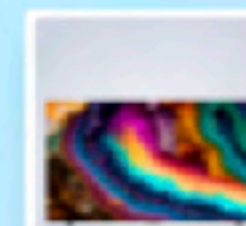
# TRUE INTENTIONS

homeZZ

Creează-ți spațiul ideal, închiriază-ți experiențele

TELE<sup>R</sup>ENTA

VEZI AICI >>



de la 29,99 lei/lună



de la 99,99 lei/lună

## ULTIMA ORĂ

» Vez

**Expoziție de pictură „Atelier memorial Prof. Univ. Dr. Ce Atodiresei**

**Armenia vrea să ceară adera**

**ZF. Prima declarație a casei avocatură care a câștigat pr Roșia Montană**

**VIDEO** Max Verstappen a c Marele Premiu al Arabiei Sa Formula 1

**Americani au parașutat în G**

The wall was publicly presented as a protective measure for Roma children. In reality, official statements revealed that its purpose was to “protect other citizens” from the Roma community.





# CRAICA

In 2011, I witnessed Mayor Cătălin Cherecheș publicly presenting, for the first time, plans to demolish the Craica settlement and other Roma communities.

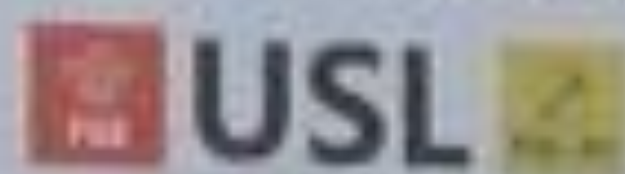
---



*Planul meu pentru Baia Mare*

**1. Demolăm cocioabele de pe  
Craica, Pirită, din Ferneziu și zona  
Gării**

**CĂTĂLIN CHERECHEȘ - PRIMAR**



**USL**

5006218A



# PUBLIC MEETINGS







**PISE - CLOSE ASSOCIATES OF THE MAYOR**









# PUBLIC MEETINGS

In 2011, during a public meeting, the mayor requested that the railway director prevent Roma people from arriving in Baia Mare by train. In 2012, I witnessed Mayor Cătălin Cherecheș presenting non-existent housing solutions for the Roma community of Craica.







Key civil society actors  
remained silent.

# OPEN SOCIETY







# CRAICA

In 2012, I was mandated by Amnesty International to document the announced forced evictions in Craica. Throughout that year, I repeatedly returned to Baia Mare and intervened each time the authorities attempted to carry out the demolitions, effectively preventing the eviction of the community.



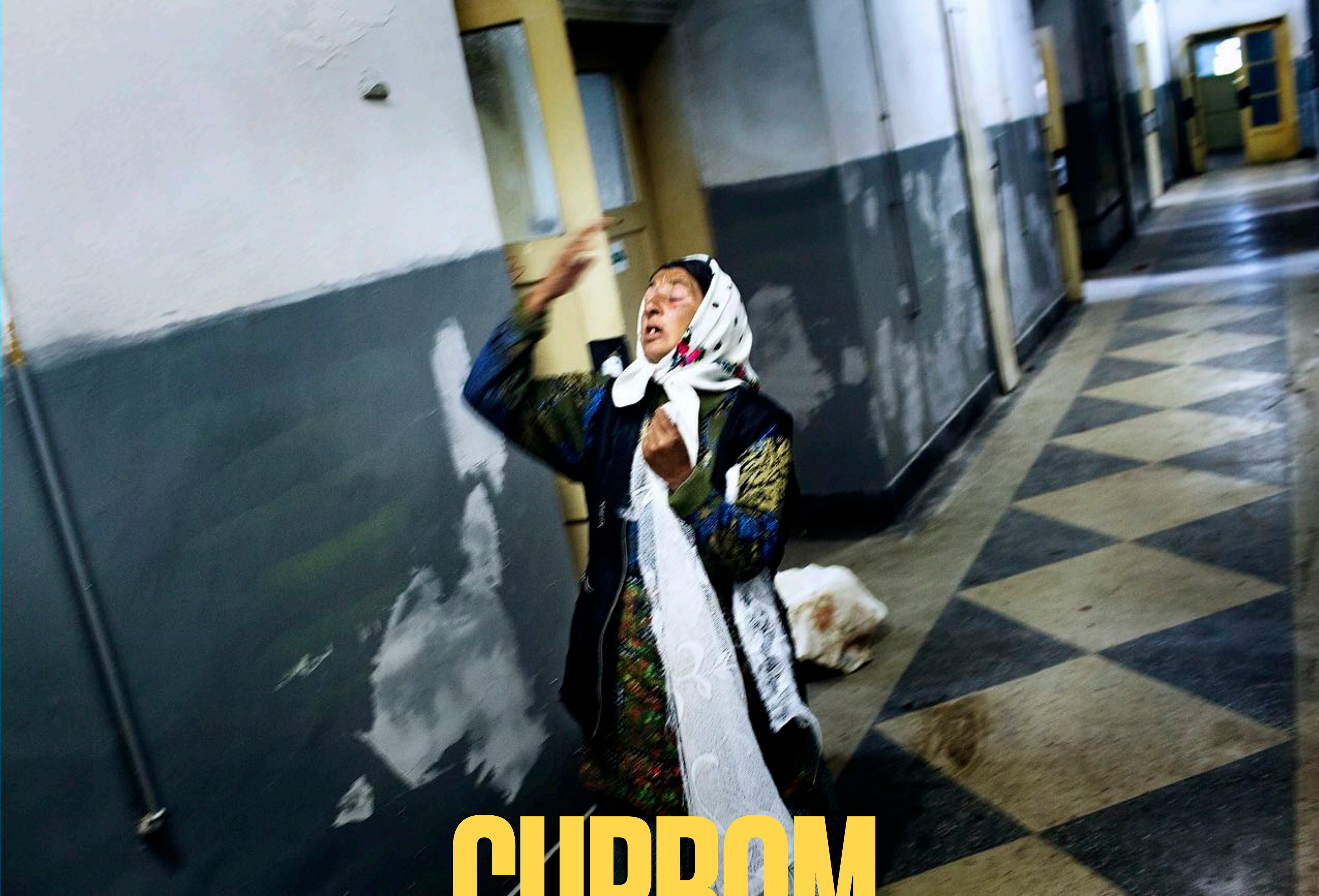












# CUPROM

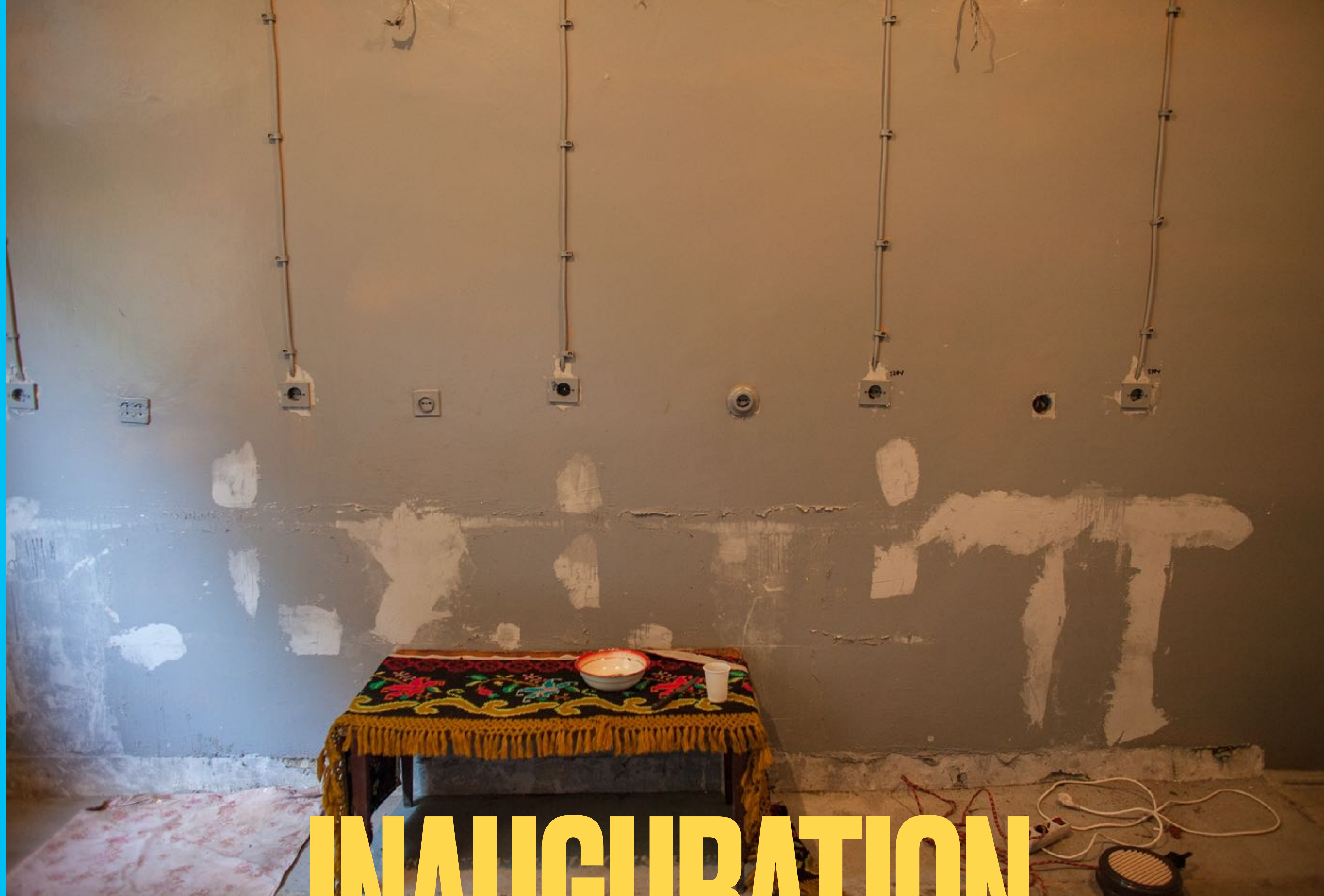
In 2012, after the forced relocation of Roma families from Craica to the former Cuprom facility, I witnessed serious health incidents affecting residents housed there. Several families, who had initially accepted the relocation, returned to Craica after experiencing these conditions.











“adequate” living  
conditions - official  
narrative

# INAUGURATION















# CUPROM

In 2012, I witnessed a visit to the Cuprom facility by the mayor's mother, which took place the day after the reported health incidents affecting Roma residents.











Administrative response  
and containment  
measures

OPERATION





up of basement access  
and utilities.

# BRICKING









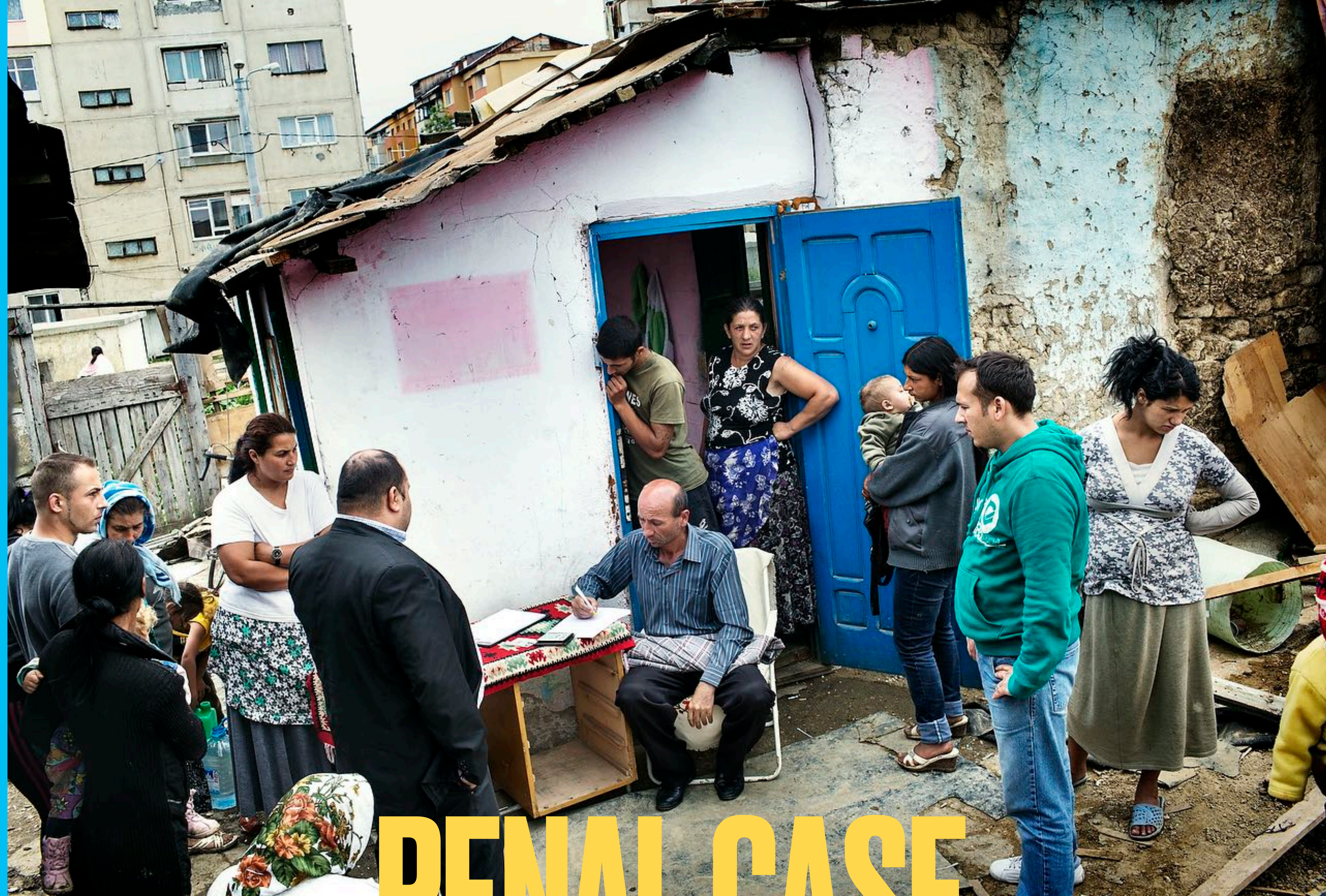


# CONTRACTS

Following the relocation, the initial housing contracts signed by Roma residents were withdrawn and replaced with new contracts containing significantly harsher terms.

---





# PENAL CASE

Roma residents were encouraged to place their trust in Romani Criss and to constitute themselves as injured parties in a criminal complaint against the municipality regarding the conditions at Cuprom.

---



- **The representatives of Romani Criss stopped responding to phone calls from Roma community members.**
- **Without legal or institutional support, and under sustained pressure from the mayor and local authorities, the affected Roma families eventually withdrew their criminal complaint.**





In 2012, I presented the situation of the Roma community from Baia Mare at the Visa pour l'Image international photojournalism festival in Perpignan, France, during a dedicated professional program.

# PROJECTION NIGHT





‘voluntary’ evictions

---

a deceitful mechanism

**US AND SWEDEN**

I was invited by the  
Embassies of the United  
States and Sweden to  
contribute to presentations  
addressing the situation of  
the Roma community in  
Baia Mare.







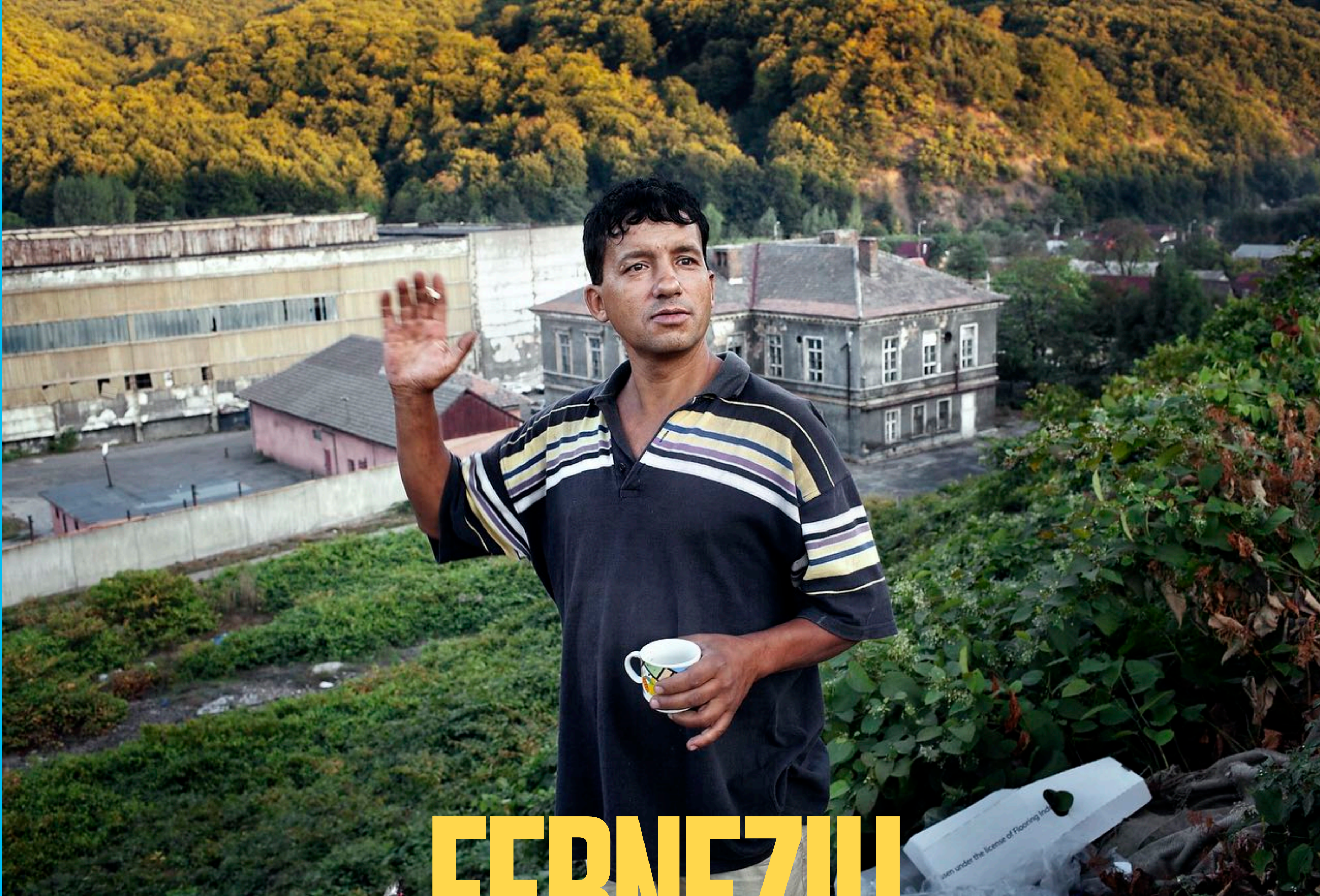
In 2013, I documented  
the daily living  
conditions in the Pirită  
Roma settlement.

PIRITĂ









# FERNEZIU

In Ferneziu, I continued documenting the daily living conditions of Roma families.











# EU PARLIAMENT

I was invited to hold an exhibition and deliver a speech at the European Parliament on the occasion of the 25th anniversary of the fall of the Berlin Wall, addressing the situation of Roma communities in Romania and the segregation wall in Baia Mare.









A woman with long dark hair, wearing a black puffer coat, stands in a narrow, dimly lit alleyway. She is looking slightly to her right. In the foreground, a person is partially visible, their face in shadow, looking towards the camera. The background shows a building with a corrugated metal roof and some debris on the ground. The scene is lit with warm, low-key lighting, creating strong shadows.

# BBC MOVIE

The BBC documentary “Living with the Roma”, featuring journalist Yalda Hakim, documented the unsafe living conditions in Baia Mare, highlighting severe sanitation and public health issues.



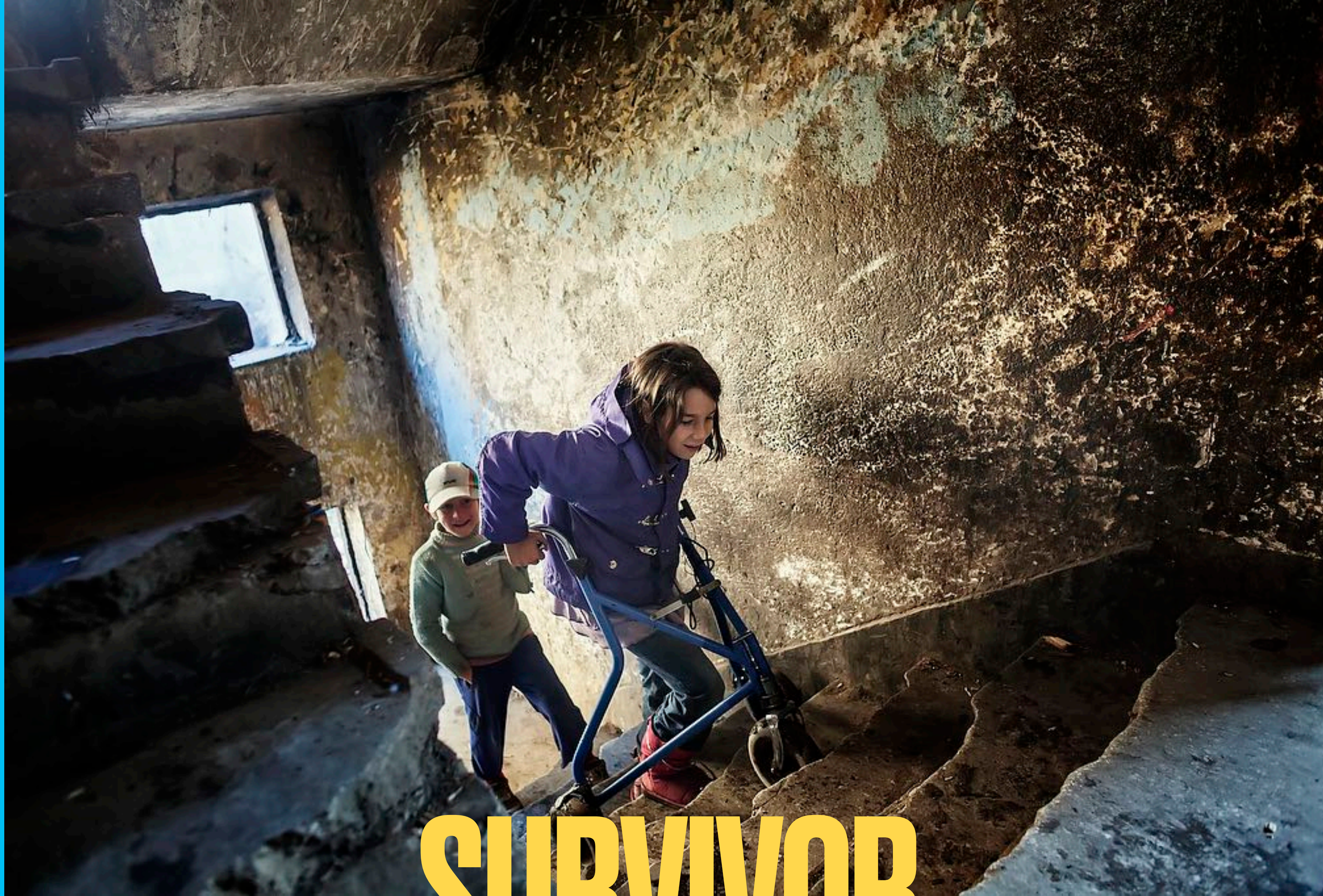






**FEW DAYS LATER**





# SURVIVOR

A few days later, my attention was drawn to a young girl using a walking aid.

Several hours later, her mother informed me that Denisa had fallen from the fourth floor while playing with other children, due to the absence of a safety railing on the balcony. She survived the fall miraculously.







SPITALUL DE URGENȚĂ  
Baza Mare

430031 Baza Mare • Str. T. Coșbuc nr. 31 • ROMANIA  
tel: (004) 0262 - 235 100/129 • fax: (004) 0262 - 276.808  
e-mail: directia@spitalbaza.ro • www.spitalbaza.ro

SISTEM INFORMATIC  
C.R.S.C. E-mail: urgen@spitalbaza.ro

# BILET DE IESIRE DIN SPITAL

Data eliberării: 20/07/2012  
Secția: CHIRURGIE SA  
ORTOPEDIE -Comp.  
Ortopedie Pediatrica  
Medic: DEMIAN VIOREL  
Perioada internării: 28/06/2012 - 20/07/2012



BERCHI  
DENISA

10 ani  
N. 455  
Baza Mare  
ROMANIA

Diagnostic principal (DRG Cod 1):  
cervicale a femurului  
Diagnostic principal (DRG Cod 2):  
ciadire sau alta constructie  
Diagnostic secundare (DRG):  
1.   
2.   
3.   
4.   
Diagnostic secundare libera:  
POLITRAUMATISM PRIN CADERE DE LA ALT NIVEL ET IV.  
Stare la externare: ameliorat

## EPICRIZA

...pentru politraumatism prin cadere de la alt nivel ( et IV ), fractura col femural stang cu deplasare, TCCA.  
...imagistice: ngf bazin, coloana cervicala, toraco-pulmonara, CT craniu. Consultanta interdisciplinara chirurgiei  
...cu placa cu suruburi ( VCO 349/02.07.2012 ) urmate de imobilizarea in stela gipsata perivasculara cu  
...Se extrag firele de sutura si se circuleaza gipsul.  
...S-a alimentat per os. Rec. monitorizare TA si  
...abdominala marcata.





# CUPROM

In 2015, I continued documenting the unsuitable and degrading living conditions at the Cuprom site.





































**MUGUR, 2024**

# **AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL**

- Between 2011 and 2012, I contributed to Amnesty International country reports and related advocacy activities concerning forced evictions and Roma rights in Romania.



















CNCD

In 2012, I provided the National Council for Combating Discrimination (CNCD) with photographic evidence that was subsequently used in court proceedings.



**Mugur Varzariu***fotograf documentar și apărător al drepturilor omului*

## Dărâmați zidul

34



Publicat: 06.10.2013 21:35    Ultima actualizare: 08.08.2022 06:03

În 2011 l-am văzut la televizor pe primarul de la Baia Mare declarând că vrea să izoleze cu un zid de beton o comunitate de romi. Dar cum acesta nu i se părea însă suficient, spunea atunci primarul că va instala în zonă un post de poliție și camere de supravegheat.

Felul în care acest rasist voia să transforme o zonă de blocuri sociale într-o puscarie mi s-a părut odios, determinându-mă să mă mișc imediat. Am ajuns eu personal în Baia Mare.

In 2013, I addressed an open letter to non-governmental organizations, outlining the concrete steps required to obtain the demolition of the segregation wall.  
No organization responded.

# OPEN LETTER



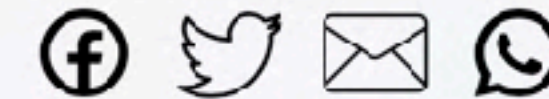


**Mugur Varzariu**

*fotograf documentar și apărător al drepturilor omului*

## Artiștii de la Cluj susțin barbaria

37



Publicat: 24.11.2014 13:36    Ultima actualizare: 07.08.2022 09:30

Scrisoare deschisă către Președintele Senatului Universității de Artă și Design din Cluj-Napoca, domnul profesor universitar doctor Ioan Sbarciu.

*Stimate domnule Ioan Sbarciu,*

Numele meu este Mugur Varzariu și sunt fotograf de documentar și ambasador al fundației World  
sion.

In 2014, I addressed an open letter to students of the University of Arts in Cluj, after they were misled by the mayor of Baia Mare into vandalizing the segregation wall under the pretext of turning it into an artistic intervention.

OPEN LETTER





# AD INSULT TO INJURY

In a public statement, Mayor Cătălin Cherecheș referred to the segregation wall using dehumanizing metaphors, further reinforcing the discriminatory narrative surrounding the Roma community.





# OPEN LETTER TO THE PRESIDENT OF ROMANIA



- **In January 2015, I addressed an open letter to the President of Romania regarding the situation of the Roma community in Baia Mare and the existence of the segregation wall.**



Domnule Președinte,

În anul 2011 am ajuns pentru prima dată în Baia Mare. Inițiativa primarului Cătălin Cherecheș de a ridica un zid de beton în jurul unei comunități de romi mi-a atras atenția și m-a determinat să mă deplasez la fața locului pentru a vedea cu ochii mei această monstruozitate. Fotografiile realizate de mine au fost folosite în procesul intentat de CNCD primăriei din Baia Mare. La sfârșitul anului 2013, Curtea Supremă, printr-o sentință definitivă și irevocabilă, a declarat zidul un act de segregare.

Am vorbit atunci cu președintele CNCD, domnul Csaba Asztalos, și l-am întrebat dacă pot cere eu, în nume propriu, demolarea zidului. Mi-a răspuns că nu pot face acest lucru ca persoană fizică, așa că am încercat să îmi înființez o fundație. Costul prea mare al capitalului social m-a împiedicat însă să îmi duc planul până la capăt.

Deși am adresat o scrisoare deschisă tuturor ONG-urilor române și nu numai, cerându-le să deschidă un nou proces, plecând de la hotărârea definitivă, și să ceară demolarea zidului, din diverse motive, pe care vă las să le intuiți, nimeni nu a mișcat un deget nici până azi.

Timp de 3 ani am documentat suferințele romilor din acel oraș, cazul zidului nefiind, din păcate, unul izolat.

Am văzut că ați răspuns pozitiv campaniei de PR a Simonei Halep atunci când v-a invitat să cântați imnul alături de ea. Deși nu sunt un sportiv, pot spera la același răspuns din partea președintelui meu atunci când vă invit să cereți în mod public dărâmarea zidului din Baia Mare?

Vă mulțumesc și sper că acest mesaj va deveni parte dintr-o listă de demne perioade din istoria României.

In January 2015, I was invited to the Presidential Palace (Cotroceni) by the President of Romania. On that occasion, I handed over a photographic album and an open letter detailing the situation of the Roma community in Baia Mare.

JANUARY 2015



unicef  
Gemeinsam für Kinder

Bei Umzug mit neuer Anschrift zurück!

unicef  
Gemeinsam für Kinder

Deutsches Komitee für UNICEF e.V.  
Höninger Weg 104, 50969 Köln  
Tel.: 0221/93650-0  
Fax: 0221/93650-279  
mail@unicef.de, www.unicef.de

Schirmherrschaft: Daniela Schadt  
Vorsitzender: Dr. Jürgen Herhaus  
Geschäftsführer: Christian Schneider  
Vereinsregister VR 5068  
Spendenkonto 300 000, Bank für  
Sozialwirtschaft Köln, BLZ 370 205 00  
IBAN: DE57 3702 0500 0000 3000 00  
BIC: BFSWDE33XXX  
Telephone: +49 (0) 221-93650-218  
20 November 2014

#WetheChildren

Dear Mugur,

We are delighted to send you three copies of the illustrated book "We the Children" to which you contributed significantly with your photo images or photo reportages. Together with the magazine GEO and Edition Lammerhuber, UNICEF Germany presented the book at Frankfurt Book Fair, a documentation of which you will find enclosed. "It is a volume that cannot soothe and offers comfort in only a few pictures. It rather reveals the to-do-list of international politics and of many specific countries and societies in the anniversary year of the Convention on the Rights of the Child – everything that has remained paper and not become a reality yet", writes editor Peter-Matthias Gaede in the preamble.

In this 296 page volume 45 photographers who participated in the competition UNICEF Photo of the Year document in moving and partially disturbing photo reportages the children's will to survive and their strength despite the dreadful circumstances they live in – as much as the happy parts of childhood and the dreams children have. The reason for this project is, as you know, the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the United Nations Convention on the Right of the Child on 20 November 2014. The book title "We the Children" takes up the opening phrase in the UN Charta "We the peoples of the United Nations".

The book is available in bookstores at a price of 49,90 Euro. We would be delighted if you could draw attention to it, for example, via social media. On [www.unicef.de/wethechildren](http://www.unicef.de/wethechildren) and at UNICEF Germany's facebook page you will find all information regarding "We the Children". If you have any further questions please do not hesitate to contact me.

# WetheChildren








Am cunoscut un om  
care si-a dorit să fie  
președinte.

We the Children

Sper ca peste 10 ani să pot  
spune că am cunoscut un  
președinte care nu a uitat  
de tine om.

11.01.2015

 Măgus Vărzaru





Das Schlimmste, was er sich vorstellt, sagt Mugur Vărzariu, sei die Gleichgültigkeit gegenüber offensichtlichem Unrecht. In seiner Dokumentation dokumentiert er die traurigen Umstände einer verlassenen Minderheit im Heimatland Rumänien: der Roma. Die gezeigten Bilder stammen aus Baia Mare, einer Stadt im Nordwesten Rumäniens, und stellenvertretend für andere Roma-Lager in den mühsamen Zeiten des Wandels von Kommunismus zur freien Marktwirtschaft auf Rumänen nach Sündenböcken für eigene erfüllte Träume. Die Minorität der Roma leidet unter hasserfüllter Ablehnung und Ausgrenzung. Schwere Übergriffe auf sie und ihren Besitz sind an der Tagesordnung. Zwangsverlagerungen nichts Ungewöhnliches. Vielen Roma ein Leben ohne Wasser und Strom, neben Müllhalden oder Kläranlagen, in ständiger Angst und Unsicherheit.

The worst he can imagine, says Mugur Vărzariu, is indifference to obvious injustice. With this attitude he documents the sad circumstances of the Roma people, an ostracized minority in his home country of Romania. His pictures shown here were taken in Baia Mare, a town in the northwest of Romania, and they stand for other Roma camps across the country. In difficult times of change from communism to a free market society, many Romanians are looking for scapegoats to blame for their own unfulfilled dreams. The Roma minority lends itself to hate-filled rejection and marginalization. Violent attacks on them and their possessions have been and still are commonplace, forced resettlement is not unusual. Many Roma are left living without running water or electricity, next to rubbish dumps or sewage treatment plants, in constant fear and uncertainty.

Mugur Vărzariu, weil ihm sein Beruf als Fotograf  
immer vorhanden, aber sein Beruf als Mensch  
ist immer da.









# 2018

In 2018, after repeated eviction attempts had failed, the local authorities adopted new measures aimed at forcing Roma families to leave their settlements.





# EVACUATION BY HUNGER

- A City Council decision abruptly prohibited the raising of livestock throughout Baia Mare, with explicit exceptions granted to non-Roma neighborhoods.
- As a result, Roma communities in Craica and Pirită were deprived of their primary means of subsistence.
- This measure effectively amounted to eviction through economic deprivation.





In 2020, legal proceedings were initiated to obtain the demolition of the segregation wall. In 2021, the first court hearing took place at the Baia Mare Court, together with the association's legal counsel.

2021





# ARRESTED

At the end of 2023, the former mayor received a final prison sentence of five years. He subsequently attempted to evade justice by fleeing the country, but was apprehended by law enforcement authorities in Germany.





# 2024

**IN 2024, A FINAL COURT RULING ORDERED THE DEMOLITION OF THE SEGREGATION WALL WITHIN THREE MONTHS OF FORMAL NOTIFICATION.**



Nume	Calitate parte
ASOCIAȚIA LOVING COLOURS	Intimat
MUNICIPIUL BAIA MARE PRIN PRIMAR	Apelant
CONSILIUL NAȚIONAL PENTRU COMBATEREA DISCRIMINĂRII	Pârât

## Ședințe

---

14.02.2024

Ora estimata: 8:30

Complet: Complet civ nr.12N apel dr.com,ff,min fam(fost 5N)

Tip solutie: Nefondat

Solutia pe scurt: Respinge apelul declarat de pârâtul Municipiul Baia Mare prin Primar, împotriva sentinței civile nr. 4614/22.05.2023, pronunțată de Judecătoria Baia Mare în dosar nr. 3857/182/2020 pe care o păstrează. Obligă apelantul să achite intimatei Asociația Loving Colours suma de 3035 lei reprezentând cheltuieli de judecată acordate parțial. Definitivă.

Pronunțată azi, 14.02.2024, prin punerea soluției la dispoziția părților prin mijlocirea grefei instanței.

Document: Hotărâre 51/2024 14.02.2024

31.01.2024

Ora estimata: 9:30

Complet: Complet civ nr.12N apel dr.com,ff,min fam(fost 5N)

Tip solutie: Amână pronunțarea

Solutia pe scurt: Amână pronunțarea în cauză pentru data de 14 februarie 2024, pronunțarea urmând a se face prin punerea



# INVITATION

**TO ROMA COMMUNITIES AND ROMA CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANIZATIONS**



# INVITATION

- I invite Roma communities and Roma civil society organizations to:
  - formally request the Municipality of Baia Mare to comply, without delay, with the final court ruling ordering the demolition of the segregation wall;
  - request transparent information regarding the timeline for the implementation of the works;
  - be present in Baia Mare at the moment the wall is finally dismantled.
- I dedicate this legal victory to all Roma people in Romania and beyond. It stands as proof that, through perseverance, solidarity, and integrity, systemic injustice can be challenged and overcome.
- Let us tear down this wall together.







# CONTEXT AND PERSONAL CONSEQUENCES

- As a result of this work, I have been subjected to repeated intimidation and harassment, including the vandalization of my car in 2012. I was publicly labeled by the mayor of Baia Mare as “Public Enemy No. 1”.
- Despite this, the situation in Baia Mare has been documented and presented internationally through major media productions and exhibitions, including the BBC documentary “Living with the Roma”, exhibitions at the European Parliament, and international photojournalism festivals.



**WHY I CONTINUE THIS WORK**











MUGUR VĂRZARIU, 2024

# I HAVE MANY REASONS...

- While working on an Amnesty International country report, I once entered a shack in Craica late in the evening, drawn by a light. There was no electricity. The family was working by flashlight. A man who had previously told me that everything he owned came from the garbage dump was carefully assembling an old picture frame. Inside it, he had arranged photographs I had given him a year earlier.
- This is why I do this work.





# YOUR SUPPORT

**HAS BEEN AWAITED SINCE 2010.**



**TO THE ATTENTION OF THE PRESIDENT OF  
ROMANIA, MR. NICUȘOR DAN**



■ **Message to the President of Romania, Nicușor Dan**

**Dear Mr. President,**

After 14 years of sustained civic engagement, professional work, and personal dedication, I have obtained a final court ruling ordering the demolition of the ethnic segregation wall in Baia Mare — a structure that violates not only constitutional principles, but also fundamental norms of human dignity and equality.

This initiative was carried out entirely outside institutional frameworks, without public funding and without political backing, driven solely by the conviction that Romania can and must acknowledge and correct the injustices of its recent past.

With the legal process now concluded, the remaining and essential step is the effective enforcement of the ruling. The demolition of the wall requires administrative coordination and public resources, and it would be both unreasonable and unjust for a private citizen to assume financial responsibility for an obligation that rests, legally and morally, with the Romanian state.

As the President of Romania, I respectfully request that you instruct the competent institutional authorities to take the necessary measures to enforce the final court decision and proceed with the demolition of the wall.

Beyond its material existence, this wall remains a powerful symbol of institutional failure and ethnic segregation. Its removal would represent not only the execution of a legal obligation, but also a clear signal that the rule of law, accountability, and respect for human dignity are once again guiding principles of the Romanian state.

For your reference, I am attaching a detailed documentary presentation outlining the history of the case, the long-standing institutional inaction, and the legal process that led to the final ruling.

Thank you for your attention to this matter.

With respect,  
Mugur Vărzariu  
Documentary Photographer & Human Rights Advocate

















hold Cherecheș  
accountable.

2012





# FOR DETAILS

**PLEASE CONTACT ME AT:**



**Asociația Loving Colours**

**ultimaora@me.com**

mai multe detalii despre implicarea socială a lui Mugur  
Vărzariu și Loving Colours puteți găsi aici:  
[www.mugurvarzariu.com](http://www.mugurvarzariu.com)

Acest proiect este creația artistică a autorului, sens în care beneficiază de protecția legală conferită de lege, de la momentul aducerii sale la cunoștința publică. Autorul este cel care decide dacă, în ce mod și când opera va fi utilizată. Orice utilizare sau transformare fără drept a creației artistice reprezintă o faptă delictuală.



**THANK YOU**