

Mailat Case in the Romanian Media.
From Crime to Crisis
Media Analysis Report

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Released February 2008

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I. Mailat Case in the Media. Content Analysis

By Ionut Codreanu

1. Methodology

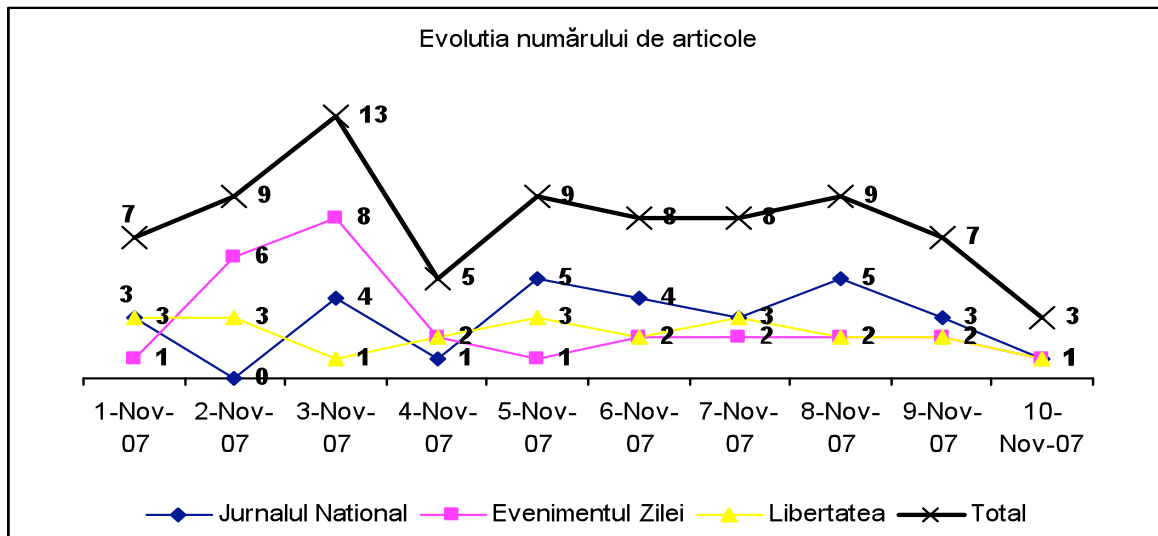
The monitoring included the electronic editions of daily newspapers *Evenimentul Zilei*, *Jurnalul Național* and *Libertatea* during November 1st – November 10th 2007. The monitoring team selected those articles including at least one of the keywords used to identify relevant articles for the purposes of the current analysis – “Roma” and associated terms, “Gypsy” and associated terms.

The goal of the analysis was to provide data upon:

- The frequency of the articles reporting on Roma ethnics or Roma ethnicity as an overall against the background of the scandal of Romanian immigrants in Italy;
- The main topics covered by the journalists in their articles;
- The issuers of the content presenting *actions* of the Roma ethnics; the analysis identified those actors – sources of communication for text fragments presenting Roma ethnics in association with various actions;
- The issuers of the content presenting *attributes* of the Roma ethnics; the analysis identified those actors – sources of communication for text fragments presenting Roma ethnics in association with various attributes;
- Abiding by the presumption of innocence in those situations when Roma ethnics were associated with crimes; one considered the presumption of innocence was violated when an individual accused of having broken the law was presented as a criminal although the Court hadn't rendered a final decision in that case.

2. Synthesis

The progress of the articles published



During November 1-10 2007, 78 articles were identified and analyzed in the newspapers *Evenimentul Zilei*, *Jurnalul Național* and *Libertatea*. These articles reported on Mailat case and related events in the context of the crime perpetrated by the Romanian citizen Nicolae Romulus Mailat. The Mailat case was covered by 59 information articles and 19 opinion articles.

Jurnalul Național published the most numerous articles on this topic (**29**), closely followed by *Evenimentul Zilei* with **27** articles. *Libertatea* published **22** articles in the monitoring period. The daily average number of articles was **8**.

Topic	No. references
Romanian authorities' reaction	29
Crimes perpetrated by Romanians residing in Italy	19
The alleged crime perpetrated by Romulus Mailat	17
Xenophobic reactions against Romanians	17
Expulsion decree	13
Expulsions in practice	11
Investigation progress in Mailat case	9
Xenophobic attacks (on Romanians)	8
Other topics	33

The most frequently covered topic pertained to the presentation of the **measures undertaken by Romanian authorities** (29 references) in order to release the tension in the diplomatic relations with Italy against the background of the crime perpetrated by

Romanian citizen Romulus Mailat. Also, the journalists covered in a broader manner the **crime phenomenon** involving Romanian citizens residing on Italian territory (19 references).

The journalists also reported in detail about the **crime perpetrated by Romulus Mailat** based on the information published by Italian press (17 references). Within the same context, the monitored newspapers warned upon several cases of **xenophobic behavior** targeting Romanian citizens living in Italy (17 references).

The initiative of Italian authorities to issue an **expulsion decree** targeting the criminals on Italian territory was presented 13 times in the analyzed articles. Consequently, there were 11 references upon actual examples of **expulsion** of criminal migrants.

The trial and the **investigation progress** in Mailat case were presented 9 times in the monitoring period, whereas there were 8 references upon **xenophobic attacks** against Romanians in Italy.

The journalists granted attention to adjacent topics as well, such as: Romania's image in the EU area against the background of the crisis, the professionalism of Romanian and Italian media in reporting this case, the social policies aimed at Roma integration initiated by Romanian authorities, the living standards in Roma communities or the frequency of the crime phenomenon amongst Roma ethnics (see the category **other topics** – 33 references).

Newspaper	In accordance with presumption of innocence	Violation of presumption of innocence	Total appearances
<i>Evenimentul Zilei</i>	6	17	23
<i>Jurnalul Național</i>	8	13	21
<i>Libertatea</i>	3	14	17
Total	17	44	61

61 of the total number of articles should have abided by the presumption of innocence. The **presumption of innocence** principle was violated in **44** of the analyzed articles.

Most actions and attributes associated to Roma ethnics in the analyzed articles mentioned undesirable behavior (crime, violence)

- **ATTRIBUTES ASSOCIATED TO ROMA ETHNICS**

Issuer	Attribute	References
Journalist	Thieves	2
	Criminals	2
	Killer	2
	Murderer	2
	Community at the outskirts of civilization	1
	Cross-breed	1
	Beggars	1
	Uncultured	1

	Robber	1
	Violent	1
Romanian officials	Mischievous	1
Italian Police	Dangerous	1
	Murderer	1
Other actors	Dangerous	1
	Crazy	1
	Robber	1
	Child with behavior problems	1
	Unable to reason	1
	Generous	1
	Having common sense	1

• ACTIONS ASSOCIATED TO ROMA ETHNICS

Issuer	Action	References
Journalist	Homicide	27
	Thefts	16
	Rapes	15
	They live in camps	14
	Physical attacks	6
	Fights	6
	Robbery	5
	Plunders	4
	They live in Gypsy camps	3
	Deprivation of freedom	2
	They work	2
	Trespassing	2
	They perpetrate crimes	2
	Begging	2
	Committed an extremely violent gesture	1
	Weapons possession	1
	Drugs possession	1
	Sequestration	1
	They live on what they pick up from the dumpster	1
	Violation of public morals	1
	Sexual services procurement	1
	Damages	1
	Offences against public order	1
	Blackmail	1
	Attacks	1
	They commit atrocities	1
	Scandals	1
	They lived in a hut	1

	They live in poverty	1
Romanian officials	They live in camps	3
	Rapes	1
	They live in ghettos	1
	They don't work	1
	They don't pay taxes	1
Associations and parties from Diaspora	They perpetrate crimes	1
	Physical attacks	1
Italian journalists	They drink alcohol	1
	They live in holes	1
	Rapes	3
	Plunders	1
	They live in a wretched shack	1
	Homicide	1
	They live in poverty	1
Italian Police	Usury	1
	They buy luxury cars	1
	Drugs traffic	1
	Human trafficking	1
	Physical attacks	1
Other actors	They work	2
	They live in an illegal camp	2
	Thefts	1
	They make little money	1
	Attacks	1
	Threats	1

3. Evenimentul Zilei

During November 1st-10th 2007, *Evenimentul Zilei* published 27 articles relevant to the purposes of the current analysis. The Mailat case and the topics pertaining to Romanian migrants in Italy were covered by 24 informative features and other three columns. The daily average number of articles published by *Evenimentul Zilei* was 3.

Topics	No. references
Crimes perpetrated by Romanians living in Italy	7
Romanian authorities' reaction	7
Expulsion decree	5
Xenophobic reactions against Romanians	5
The alleged crime perpetrated by Romulus Mailat	4
Expulsions	3
Investigation in Mailat case	2
Xenophobic attacks against Romanians	2
Romania's image	2
Giovanna Reggiani funeral	2
Justice in Romania	2
Profile of Romulus Mailat	2
Roma integration within the society	1
The launch of a discussion forum on Mailat case	1
Romanian migrants (benefits for Italy and Romania)	1
Spain's reaction to potential expulsions from Italy	1

The **crimes perpetrated by Romanians** living in Italy and the **Romanian authorities' reaction** aimed at releasing the tension in the relations with Italy were the topics covered most frequently by (seven references each). The journalists presented and analyzed the criminals' **expulsion decree** issued in Italy and also warned upon several cases of xenophobic reactions against Romanians (5 references each).

The events leading to the **alleged crime** perpetrated by Romulus Mailat were presented four times. *Evenimentul Zilei* also published three stories on the **expulsion** of undesirable persons from Italy.

The other topics identified in the monitoring were covered less than twice.

In 23 of the 27 analyzed articles the **presumption of innocence** should have been considered and observed. The presumption of innocence was violated in 16 articles.

Most attributes and actions associated to the Roma ethnics in the articles published by *Evenimentul Zilei* referred to undesirable behaviors (crime, violence, lack of organization etc.).

- ATTRIBUTES ASSOCIATED TO ROMA ETHNICS

Issuer	Attribute	References
Journalist	Thieves	1
	Criminals	1
	Killer	1
	Community at the outskirts of civilization	1
Romanian officials	Mischievous	1
Other actors	Child with behavior problems	1
	Unable to reason	1
	Generous	1
	Having common sense	1

- ACTIONS ASSOCIATED TO ROMA ETHNICS

Issuer	Action	References
Journalist	Homicide	9
	Rapes	6
	Thefts	3
	They live in camps	3
	Physical attacks	2
	Fights	2
	They live in Gypsy camps	2
	Committed an extremely violent gesture	1
	Weapons possession	1
	Drugs possession	1
	Plunders	1
	Deprivation of freedom	1
	They work	1
	Sequestration	1
	They live on what they pick up from the dumpster	1
	Violation of public morals	1
	Trespassing	1
	They perpetrate crimes	1
	Sexual services procurement	1
Romanian officials	They live in camps	2
	Rapes	1
	They live in ghettos	1
	They don't work	1
	They don't pay taxes	1
Other actors	They work	2
	Thefts	1
	They make little money	1
Italian journalist	They drink alcohol	1
	They live in holes	1

4. Jurnalul Național

During November 1st-10th 2007, *Jurnalul Național* published 16 information features and 13 opinion articles relevant for the purposes of the current analysis.

Topics	No. references
Romanian authorities' reaction	11
Crimes perpetrated by Romanians living in Italy	8
Expulsion decree	6
Expulsions	6
Xenophobic attacks	5
The alleged crime perpetrated by Romulus Mailat	5
Xenophobic reactions against Romanians	5
Investigation in Mailat case	3
Romulus Mailat family	3
Lack of professionalism in the media	3
Other topics	4

Most of the analyzed articles published by *Jurnalul Național* in the monitoring period covered **crimes perpetrated by Romanians in Italy** (8 references within the analyzed articles). The approval of the provisions of the **expulsion decree** for the migrants considered to be dangerous by Italian authorities and the subsequent debates on the topic were covered by 6 of the 29 monitored articles. Also 6 articles reported on the **expulsion** of Romanian citizens.

The scenario of the **alleged crime perpetrated by Romanian citizen Nicolae Romulus Mailat** was covered in 5 articles.

Italians' **xenophobic reactions** (intolerant declarations, discrimination deeds towards Romanian immigrants) and the **xenophobic attacks** were covered in 5 articles each during the monitoring period.

The **investigation** conducted by Italian authorities in the case of the Romanian citizen Romulus Mailat was presented within three information articles. The return to Romania of **Mailat family** members was also reported within three informative features. In three articles journalists criticized the Italian and Romanian media coverage upon the alleged deeds of Romulus Mailat (the topic "**lack of professionalism in media**", 3 references).

21 of the total number of articles should have abided by the presumption of innocence regarding various actors and specific crimes presented in those respective articles. The **presumption of innocence** principle was violated in 13 of the analyzed articles and observed in 8 articles.

Most attributes and actions associated to the Roma ethnics in the articles published by *Jurnalul Național* referred to undesirable behaviors (crime, violence).

- ASSOCIATED ATTRIBUTES

Issue	Attribute	References
Journalist	Murderer	2
	Cross-breed	1
	Beggars	1
	Thieves	1
	Uncultured	1
	Robber	1
	Killer	1
	Violent	1
Italian police	Dangerous	1

- ASSOCIATED ACTIONS

Issuer	Action	References
Journalist	Homicide	7
	Thefts	4
	They live in camps	4
	Plunders	3
	Rapes	3
	Fights	2
	Physical attacks	2
	Thefts	2
	Robbery	2
	Begging	1
	Damages	1
	Deprivation of freedom	1
	Homicide	1
	They live in camp	1
	Violation of public order	1
	Trespassing	1
	Rapes	1
Italian journalist	Rapes	2
	Plunders	1
	They live in a wretched shack	1
	Homicide	1
	They live in poverty	1
Italian police	Usury	1
	They buy luxury cars	1
	Drugs traffic	1
	Human trafficking	1
Associations and parties from Diaspora	They perpetrate crimes	1
	Physical attacks	1
Other actors	They live in an illegal camp	2

5. Libertatea

Libertatea published 22 articles on Mailat case during November 1st -10th 2007. The Mailat case and the issues pertaining to Romanian migrants living in Italy were presented in 19 informative features and other three columns. *Libertatea* published an average of 2.2 articles on the topic each day.

Topics	No. references
Romanian authorities' reaction	11
The alleged crime perpetrated by Romulus Mailat	8
Xenophobic reactions against Romanians	7
Crimes perpetrated by Romanians living in Italy	5
Investigation in Mailat case	4
Expulsions	4
Profile of Costică Argint	2
Romanian migrants (benefits for Italy and Romania)	2
Romulus Mailat family	1
Crime amongst Roma ethnics	1
NGOs' reaction towards the declaration of the Foreign Affairs Minister	1
Roma social situation in Romania	1

The journalists reporting for *Libertatea* covered preponderantly the **reaction of Romanian authorities** aimed at releasing the tensions between Bucharest and Rome (11 references). The elements converging towards the **alleged crime perpetrated by Romulus Mailat** were presented 8 times. Warnings upon the **xenophobic reactions against Romanians** were presented 7 times in *Libertatea* daily. The newspaper published in the same period articles on the **crime phenomenon** generated by Romanian migrants in Italy (5 references).

The progress of the **investigation in Mailat case** and the **expulsions** initiated by Italian authorities were covered in 4 articles each.

The other topics identified in the monitoring were covered less than twice.

17 of the 22 analyzed articles should have abided by the **presumption of innocence**. The **presumption of innocence** principle was violated in 14 of these articles.

Most attributes and actions associated to the Roma ethnics in the articles published by *Libertatea* referred to undesirable behaviors (crime, violence, lack of organization etc.).

- ATTRIBUTES ASSOCIATED TO ROMA ETHNICS

Issuer	Attribute	References
Journalist	Criminals	1
Romanian citizens	Dangerous	1
	Crazy	1
Representatives of Roma ethnics	Robber	1

- ACTIONS ASSOCIATED TO ROMA ETHNICS

Issuer	Action	References
Journalist	Homicide	10
	Thefts	7
	They live in camps	6
	Rapes	5
	Robbery	3
	Physical attacks	2
	Fights	2
	Blackmail	1
	Attacks	1
	Begging	1
	They perpetrate crimes	1
	They commit atrocities	1
	They work	1
	Scandals	1
	They were living in a hut	1
	They live in poverty	1
	They live in Gypsy camps	1
Romanian officials	They live in camps	1
Italian journalists	Rapes	1
Italian police	Physical attacks	1
Other actors	Attacks	1
	Threats	1

II. Mailat Case in the Media. A Narrative of the Events Unfolding in the First Week of Reporting

By Nicoleta Fotiade

1. Methodology benchmarks

News wise press topics are divided into two broad categories: *current issues* on media agenda that are reported via well established mechanisms (i.e. the debates on the public budget, school year opening, college admission exams, elections etc.) and *out-of-the-ordinary topics* based on exceptional events likely to generate social, political or economical crisis. Natural disasters, terrorist attacks or stock market crashes are some of the topics that fall under the second category. In such circumstances reporting is a challenge for any media professional, especially in the first days of the story unfolding when journalists feel the deadline pressure whereas the information is scarce and difficult to verify, the sources inaccessible. The professional background and the journalists' judgment become of high importance under such circumstances. The choices made by journalists in such exceptional situations are essential for the public's perception upon this kind of issues.

In the context of the Rome incident, public opinion and Italian authorities' reactions transformed the attack against an Italian citizen into a major social crisis whose reporting fell under the circumstances typical for out-of-the-ordinary topics. The current analysis observed the media coverage of the murder allegedly committed by a Romanian citizen of Roma ethnicity nearby Tor di Quinto train station in Rome and that of the crisis unfolding during the first days of reporting¹.

In addition our media analysis focused on potential violations of the professional journalistic ethics. The study includes observations and comments pertaining to situations when the journalists did not abide by elementary journalistic ethical rules – presumption of innocence, non-association of a crime with the author's ethnicity, publishing information that was not backed up by data (i.e. unclear statistics without quoting sources), use of manipulation techniques – generalizing in the description of particular situations, omitting information etc.

The data was collected by presenting the main topics identified in the three newspapers² in chronological order. The study was elaborated in three steps:

- Selection of incoming information that constructed the journalistic narrative every day. Only information articles were taken into consideration within this part of the analysis.
- Classification of this information in thematic categories.
- Development of a narrative to understand the way in which journalists constructed their discourse in the context of the Mailat case and the crisis of Romanian immigrants in Italy unfolding during the first six days of reporting.

¹ November 1st–6th 2007

² The study observed the media coverage of the "Mailat case" in the electronic editions of three national newspapers - *Evenimentul Zilei*, *Jurnalul Național* and *Libertatea* – the top circulation dailies in Romania.

2. Main topics contributing to the construction of the journalists' narrative in the three newspapers

November 1st. Account of Mailat's deed – publication of prime information gathered from various sources (police, eye witnesses, neighbors); Italian authorities' urgent issuing of a decree to facilitate the expulsion of foreign criminals; Romanian authorities' reactions, the cooperation between Romanian and Italian authorities, Prime Minister Tăriceanu's critics towards the Italian authorities.

November 2nd. Additional information in Mailat's case – defendant's hearing; stories on Mailat family; control and eviction operations in Roma camps; data referring to the number of Romanians proposed for expulsions, crime statistics.

November 3rd. Reporting on details regarding Nicolae Mailat's private life; victim's funeral; Italian authorities started identifying Romanians proposed for expulsion; Romanians in Italy – *victims* of racist and xenophobic attacks or *offenders* having attacked and robbed Italian citizens; street interviews with members of the Romanian community in Italy; declarations from Italian authorities disapproving of the racist attacks against Romanians; raids of the Italian police aimed at identifying Romanian criminals.

November 4th. Raids in Roma communities; victim's funeral; Romanian authorities' measures against the racist and xenophobic attacks in Italy; the first orders to expel Romanians signed and the first Romanians/Roma reached Bucharest; reactions from the political groups and Romanian associations in Italy in the context of the crisis.

November 5th. The result of the autopsy invalidated the rape theory; reactions of nongovernmental organizations to the declarations made by the Foreign Affairs Minister, Adrian Cioroianu.

November 6th. The return of Mailat's mother in Romania; Romanians' condition in Italy and abroad; the march organized by the Conservative Party in front of the Embassy of Italy; Corneliu Vadim Tudor³ appointed by the Parliament to contact the Italian authorities in order to settle the crisis.

³ According to some newspapers, well-known nationalist promoting an anti-Roma discourse.

3. Thematic categories in the reports on *Mailat case and the crisis of Romanians in Italy*:

3.1. Deed. The incident nearby Tor di Quinto train station in Rome (Italy) – a woman “was raped, beaten and abandoned in trench” by Romulus Nicolae Mailat, Romanian of Roma ethnicity was presented to the Romanian public starting November 1st. Romanian newspapers and TV stations published without exception information from Italian media. The electronic edition of *Evenimentul Zilei* quoted *Corriere della Serra* and reported that “the wife of a navy officer was raped by a Romanian of Roma ethnicity from Sibiu“. The news feature was accompanied by video footage from the “Roma camp where the *killer* lived“. The readers found out that the victim Giovanna Reggiani while returning home from shopping was attacked on a scanty, dark street close to the place where the “gypsy camp” of illegal immigrants from Romania settled.

Evenimentul Zilei also reported on the existence of an *eyewitness*. The informer – “the jealous lover”, “the killer’s concubine” or Emilia, “a gypsy from the camp” allegedly caught Mailat while “he was trying to get rid of the body of the woman that showed no sign of life. The gypsy woman saw him when he dumped Giovanna’s body in the trench and warned a police squad in the area”. “The Carabinieri seized Mailat several hours later“. The victim’s bag that was found by the police in the shack where Mailat lived was considered incriminating evidence. The opinions of the Tor di Quinto residents completed the reports published in the first day. A neighbor of the victim that arrived at the hospital criticized the Italian authorities stating, “We had it coming. For years we have been fighting as Tor di Quinto was occupied by illegal immigrants”.

In contrast with *Evenimentul Zilei* and *Jurnalul Național* (as you shall notice later in the study) *Libertatea* informed its readers “the criminal was *exposed by his own mother*, who saw her son carrying the body of the woman after having attacked her. The old woman whose name is Emilia is now in Police custody and will be heard together with her son...” Quoting *Giornalistica Italia*, *Libertatea* started its account on the case from the perspective of the Italian prosecutor who required “the arrest of the Romanian citizen Nicolae Romulus Mailat (24), *accused of having attacked and raped* on Tuesday a 47 years old woman from Rome, Giovanna Reggiani” and continued: “*according to his own declarations*, the Roma man attacked her to satisfy his sexual desires, as he was missing his wife left in Romania. He raped, beat, and dumped Giovanna Reggiani in a ditch nearby Tor di Quinto train station from Rome“. No other publication we observed quoted such declarations. Later that week the autopsy determined that the victim was not raped. At the moment when the first articles were published, the victim was in severe coma, “her skull is crashed, her body is badly hit and her survival chances are close to 0, according to the doctors” (*Libertatea*, November 1st).

In *Jurnalul Național* the article entitled “*Rome – Another Romanian terrifies Italy*” reported on the cooperation between Romanian and Italian police officers “within the case of a Romanian investigated for the rape and murder of the wife of an officer in the military navy“. The article mentioned that “according to Police sources, during the interrogatory”, Romulus Mailat “investigated for voluntary manslaughter” “had allegedly admitted he was guilty“. According to the newspaper, the *eyewitness* that also called the police was a “fellow countrywoman from the Roma camp in Tor di Quinto“. Towards the end of the day, *Jurnalul Național* reported that Giovanna Reggiani died after several hours in the hospital.

Additional information in Mailat case. The second day (Friday, November 2nd), the newspapers reported on *Mailat's interrogation*. *Libertatea* covered the case in detail. According to its electronic edition, Mailat was imprisoned at the high security penitentiary Regina Coeli in Rome and added, "The criminal is isolated due to death threats from the other prisoners, many of whom were Romanians". Under the headline "*Pardoned to kill*", the newspaper published once again an account of the Rome incident, violating the presumption of innocence principle and associating the crime with ethnicity: "*A horrific violent deed committed by a Romanian gypsy upon a 47 years old Italian woman that now lies in deep coma brought our country once again on the front page of Italian newspapers, while the TV news bulletins start with this atrocity (...)* According to Police Inspectorate Sibiu, the gypsy Nicolae Romulus Mailat killed in Italy after having been pardoned in Romania".

Libertatea continued to identify Mailat's mother with the eyewitness of the incident and noted that the "Roma people who live in the same wretched camp in Tor di Quinto are outraged that the old woman betrayed her son and *said* they would *find her and kill her*". This quote reveals the fact that *Libertatea* associated information with a discriminative nature toward Roma minority by generalizing and bringing no factual base.

In addition *Libertatea* reported "during the interrogatory (...) Mailat denied having raped and beaten the Italian woman. He only admitted that he pulled her bag from her shoulder". The news contradicted the information published by *the* same newspaper the day before when "*according to his own declarations*" he had allegedly raped, beaten and dumped her in a ditch. However, the Italian police sources announced that traces of the physical confrontation with the victim were found on Nicolae Mailat and provided details on what happened. *Libertatea* alone also mentioned *an accomplice*, "seemingly a resident of the same shacks camp in Tor di Quinto".

Evenimentul Zilei published once again the "re-enactment of the attack upon Giovanna Reggiani" who was "raped and savagely beaten because she tried to resist".

On Saturday, November 3rd, the three daily newspapers repeated the same information they released in the couple of days since the issue emerged in the media. If in the first day there were some attempts to abide by the presumption of innocence (*Jurnalul Național*, *Libertatea*), in the third day all the three newspapers identified Mailat as being guilty of theft, rape and murder. For the most part the journalistic discourse did not apply the presumption of innocence: "she was attacked on Tuesday night by Romanian citizen of Roma ethnicity Nicolae Romulus Mailat who *beat and raped her*" (*Evenimentul Zilei*), "G. R., the victim of Romanian Nicolae Mailat, who *beat and raped her*" (*Jurnalul Național*). Although it used phrases typical for the presumption of innocence ("*had allegedly raped and beat to death*") *Libertatea* violates the principle two sentences later and calls Mailat a "*murderer*". However, all the three newspapers added that Mailat admitted only the theft and denied the other accusations.

Jurnalul Național presented the *results of the preliminary investigations* and brought new information about the *witness*: "the woman in the Roma camp that reported Mailat's deed is now in police custody as part of the camp residents wanted to lynch her for betrayal". The background information was similar to those published by *Libertatea* only the witness's identity was different. The information about the criminal record of the defendant published by *Evenimentul Zilei* and *Jurnalul Național* completed the accounts of the first days: "Thief in Romania, rapist and murdered in Italy" was the headline of *Evenimentul Zilei* (November 2nd).

Five days from the incident, new data gathered during the investigation contradicted part of the journalists' reports published so far. The *autopsy results published* on Tuesday, November 5th, revealed that the victim was not raped by Nicolae Mailat, as opposed to the firm reports of Italian and Romanian media. *Libertatea* stated that "following the autopsy, no external evidence was found to indicate that Romulus Mailat had raped Giovanna, as the Italian press reported". Although the articles in *Evenimentul Zilei* incriminated Mailat for rape as well, the newspaper had not immediately published the autopsy results invalidating the rape theory. The readers of *Jurnalul Național* found about the autopsy results from the column entitled "*Romania like manipulation*" published on November 6th.

In the sixth day the Italian police quoted by *Evenimentul Zilei* announced the *hearing of the witness*, "a Roma woman".

3.1.1. Mailat's family and close friends in the media. Even from the first day of Mailat case, the journalists granted attention to Mailat family (especially his mother) and his close friends. They published excerpts from the interviews with the mother, the grandfather from Avrig, his girlfriend⁴, the neighbors in the camp near Tor di Quinto, the neighbors from the village where he was born. As far as Nicolae Mailat mother is concerned, from the first day *Libertatea* identified her as the eye witness of the plunder and the rape, although *Evenimentul Zilei* and *Jurnalul Național* said the witness was a woman from the camp and speculated about her position as Mailat concubine. *Evenimentul Zilei* published a story on Mailat's mother stating "she was convinced her son did not attack the Italian woman" and reminded about the mental problems of her son. The reasons behind the return of the mother in Romania were exposed in the electronic edition of *Libertatea* newspaper - "in Italy we were afraid they would kill us, as everybody said we were criminals. We packed our bags and spent the last days wherever we could, we were hiding" (November 4th) as well as in the electronic edition of *Jurnalul Național* - "I left Rome in fear, as one cannot live there anymore. The Italians no longer make a difference between Gypsies and Romanians. They said they would kill us all and then I left".

The return of the mother to Avrig, in Sibiu County was covered in detail by the three newspapers on November 6th. *Jurnalul Național* published a broad story on the

⁴ *Libertatea* published a long story on Mailat's girlfriend, portraying her as a person who lives in poverty, devoted to Mailat and keeping her faith about his innocence. The articles is rich in literary phrases: (*header*) "A life taken savagely at the outskirts of Rome, on the impracticable roads of a gypsy camp, shocked the entire Italy that now wants blood, wants to avenge the woman who was attacked and robbed. Far from the "boot-shape peninsula" where hell broke loose on gypsies, in a forgotten place in Romania an innocent woman bears the cross for the sins of her murderer lover. Aurelia Bambu, 27, from the small village Arăpașu de Sus in Sibiu lives in daily fear that she would be banished, beaten or even killed by neighbors or relatives".

"Gypsy life between the dry banks of land hiding Arăpașu de Sus is harsh. One can see through the holes in the walls of the huts made of clay and straws the emptiness of the bleak and humid rooms. The tottering roofs are close to collapsing at the faintest wind blow and there is not a shadow of poultry in the yards. Only the kids are joyful here because they do not understand anything. Maybe just a few words in Italian they heard from their parents who spend more time in the 'Boot' than in the gypsy camp (...) Aurelia Bambu and her lover Romulus Mailat are also sad characters of this beamless world from where they wanted to escape forever. The man left for Italy supposedly to work there, but he got in jail after cracking a woman's skull with a rock" (November 4th).

spot. *Libertatea* and *Evenimentul Zilei* covered the issue emphasizing the appeals of the Roma community to send Mailat family away from Avrig village. A headline in *Libertatea* stated: "The Gypsies repudiated the family of Romulus Nicolae Mailat, *the Roma man who killed Italian* *Giovanna Reggiani*".

Details about the private life of Nicolae Mailat were published especially by *Libertatea*. Before Nicolae Mailat ("the man who scared Italy with the deed he was arrested for") left for Italy, his sister had been beaten to death by her husband, who had decided to kill her because "he felt neglected as a man" (November 3rd).

"Poverty" and "wretchedness" were emphasized in the articles depicting the living conditions of the people in Mailat's village. This happened firstly in Italian newspapers such as *Corriere della Sera* that sent correspondents to Avrig or to the Roma camp nearby Tor di Quinto and subsequently in Romanian newspapers as they quoted Italian media or sent their own journalists to report from Avrig. On November 5th, *Jurnalul Național* republished information on the village of Avrig as reported by *Corriere della Sera*. The article started by associating Roma ethnics with crime: "In Avrig Roma people barely make a living from the sale for a few pennies of the iron they steal. Many admit they do this abroad as well (...) They are however shocked by the xenophobia stirred by the murder committed by Mailat in Italy. "Now I cannot steal in Italy no more", cries a man in the crowd gathered around Nicolae's hut. "There's so much hate against our country and this is the only thing that now unites Romanians and Roma". Same report of *Corriere della Serra* was republished almost entirely in *Evenimentul Zilei* on November 6th.

The details from the *victim's funeral* outlined the journalistic discourse on Mailat issue. *Evenimentul Zilei* covered this topic during a period of two days. Once more quoting from Italian press, the three newspapers informed that the funeral service was attended, besides family and friends, by Italian officials, passers by and "Romanians who didn't speak Romanian in fear of potential violent reactions from Italians" (*Evenimentul Zilei*, November 3rd). On November 4th, *Evenimentul Zilei* quoted *La Repubblica* and depicted in detail the events taking place on the funeral service day. The moment when the coffin was taken out of the church was identified with the climax of the event, when "the audience started a verbal mutiny: "We are afraid!", "Make laws!", "Romanians, back to your country!" *Libertatea* mentioned the absence of Romanian authorities and the reactions of the participants who "wanted revenge for the horrendous murder" and shouted: "Death to Romanians! Murderers, go home!" (November 4th).

3.1.2. Ethical principles violated in the reports covering Mailat case. As pointed out by the analysis in the introductory part of this study, one can notice how often the journalists of the three newspapers observed violated the *presumption of innocence principle*. Starting with the first day and the first paragraph, *Evenimentul Zilei* labeled Nicolae Mailat as a "murderer", thus violating his presumption of innocence: "... the wife of a navy officer who was *raped by a Romanian of Roma ethnicity* from Sibiu". The article was presented along with video footage of the Roma camp "where the *murderer* lived". Nevertheless, the third paragraph of the same article stated that "the Roma man Nicolae Mailat [was] *accused of having raped and nearly killed her...*"⁵

⁵ The quote highlights another important aspect: the article explicitly states the criminal's ethnicity although it is irrelevant. Such practices occur frequently in Romanian media, especially when it comes to Roma ethnics.

It has to be outlined that even if two newspapers started their reports observing the presumption of innocence of the defendant they violated the principle in the second story published the same day. Several examples follow below:

Libertatea, November 1st, electronic edition, first article on the issue: „Romulus Mailat, 24, *accused of having attacked and raped* a woman in Rome on Tuesday”; the second article: “Nicolae Romulus Mailat, 25, Roma man from Romania (...) *perpetrated a deed* that brought our country once again under Italian public opinion scrutiny... He *raped, beat and then dumped* Giovanna Reggiani in a ditch nearby Tor di Quinto train station in Rome”.

Similarly, *Jurnalul Național* observed the presumption of innocence in Mailat case in its first story published on the topic “*investigated for the rape and murder...*” “*suspected of having attacked* a woman”, but the same article continued with “the Romanian of Roma ethnicity that *beat and raped* an Italian woman on Tuesday”.

The lack of consistency in the observance and violation of the two ethical principles (presumption of innocence and association of one’s ethnicity with crime) was encountered in all the reports with frequent variations. Even if *Evenimentul Zilei* started its reporting on the issue by convicting Mailat without a final ruling, subsequently the publication used wordings that sometimes abided and other times violated the two principles:

- “the wife of a navy officer *was raped* by a Romanian of Roma ethnicity”,
- “Giovanna Regianni *was raped and savagely beaten*”,
- “The Italian woman *killed* by Nicolae Mailat”,
- “Romulus Nicolae Mailat, the man *who raped and killed* Italian woman Giovanna Reggiani”,
- “*the woman murdered* by the Romanian of Roma ethnicity Romulus Nicolae Mailat was buried”,
- “Giovanna Reggiani, the Italian woman *allegedly killed* by Romanian immigrant Romulus Mailat was buried yesterday”,
- “Giovanna Reggiani, the woman *killed* by a Romanian citizen of Roma ethnicity nearby Rome was buried yesterday...”,
- “the Italian woman *attacked and murdered* on October 30 by 24 years old Romanian gypsy Nicolae Romulus Mailat”.

3.2. Romanians living in Italy. The reactions and reports of Italian media to the incident occurred nearby Tor di Quinto train station in the evening of October 31st 2007, transformed a murder committed by one individual into a crisis targeting Romanians living in Italy. Most reporting made reference to the effects of the denigration against Romanians in Italy given the context of a murder allegedly committed by a Romanian (like racist and xenophobic reactions against Romanians), to the emergency meetings of Italian authorities that resulted in the immediate passing of a decree simplifying the procedure to expel foreign criminals without a Court decision (*Evenimentul Zilei* and *Jurnalul Național* covered the topic starting the first day), on the cooperation between Romanian and Italian authorities in Mailat case as well as for identifying solutions to the issue of Romanian criminals living in Italy.

Additionally, the reports on Romanians/Roma who robbed or attacked Italians during November 1st to 6th as the crisis was unfolding added to those materials reporting on Romanians in the role of victims of street attacks. The dichotomy between *criminal Romanian* and *respectable Romanian* dominated the reporting in the three newspapers

as if to counteract the negative image promoted by Italian media (the tendency to present the Romanian minority in a negative manner was visible also prior to the emergence of Mailat case). In the first six days after the killing of Giovanna Regianni, the honest decent Romanian living in Italy had an image associated to that of the *Romanian – victim of racist and xenophobic reactions*.

Journalists at *Evenimentul Zilei* considered that one of the elements contributing to the escalation of the crisis was the xenophobic speech delivered by Rome's Mayor who, upon finding the facts related to Mailat's deed, stated Romanians living in Italy should be defined as a group for which "murder is the main feature".

a) The expulsion decree targeting foreign criminals. Beginning the first day of reporting on the issue, *Evenimentul Zilei* reported on the urgent reunion of the Council of Ministers in Rome aimed at "discussing the situation occurred after another crime had been committed by a Romanian citizen living in Italy". In its hourly updated electronic edition, *Libertatea* mentioned about the Italian Government's reunion aimed at discussing the situation of Romanian immigrants. Likewise, *Jurnalul Național* wrote that "the arrest of the Romanian immigrant resulted in the organization (...) of an extraordinary meeting of the Government in Rome that passed a series of urgent measures meant to simplify procedures to expel foreign criminals". According to these measures, foreign criminals or illegal residents "can be sent home immediately without a Court order, based solely on the Prefect's decision", "an unprecedented measure in the EU (...)" *Evenimentul Zilei* added.

During the first six days reporting on the Mailat issue, the newspapers referred to those people *targeted by the expulsion decree* sometimes as "foreign criminal immigrants" or "illegal immigrants" (*Evenimentul Zilei*), sometimes as "EU nationals" (*Libertatea*, *Evenimentul Zilei*). *Jurnalul Național* covered the issue in a more particular manner, calling it "Expulsion decree for Romanian immigrants" or referred to the expulsion decree of EU nationals "aimed particularly at Romanian immigrants"; hence, a confusion between the terms "immigrant" and "EU national", individuals with different status in the European Union territory⁶.

At that point Italian authorities made public statements aimed at mitigating the racist reactions against Romanians and pointed out the expulsion decree was not particularly addressed to Romanian immigrants.

The control and eviction operations started by Italian authorities in Roma camps at the outskirts of the cities as a follow up to the decree were reported by *Evenimentul Zilei* the second day after the emergence of Mailat case in the media.

Jurnalul Național and *Libertatea* continued to report on the decree effects and on November 3rd stated that the *Italian authorities started the identification of the Romanians proposed to be expelled*. Both newspapers mentioned a number of 5000 "Romanians likely to be expelled". *Jurnalul Național*: "Italian authorities in Rome, Milan, Naples, Turin, and Florence have already started counting the Romanians they want to

⁶ The term "Romanian immigrants" in Italy is inaccurate since Romania joined the EU, a political and administrative structure Italy is also part of. This is probably why there had been a confusion between the terms referring to the category addressed by the emergency ordinance issued by Italian authorities. In January 2008, European MP Renate Weber draw the attention upon the status of Romanians in Italy who are there as EU nationals and not as "Romanian immigrants": "European MP from PNL Renate Weber criticizes the media manipulation (on purpose or out of ignorance) in calling the Romanian workers immigrants, although they are already EU nationals for more than one year. Thus, "they are no longer subject to the regulations pertaining to immigrants, but to those pertaining to the freedom of movement in the EU ". (see the article published on January 16th 2008 at http://www.euractiv.ro/uniunea-europeana/articles|displayArticle/articleID_12284/Renate-Weber-critica-presa-si-CE-pentru-nerespectarea-drepturilor-lucratorilor-romani-in-strainatate.html)

expel and reached several thousands. In Rome only according to Police and Carabinieri calculations there are some 5,000 Romanians likely to be expelled". "We will sign the first expulsion orders in no time. We have to be tough as one can deal with beasts only with maximum acerbity. We must clear the water and do away with the infected fishes and this will also help the Romanians who come to Italy to make an honest living", Rome Prefect Carlo Mosca said, mentioning that the phrase "Criminal Romanians" is unacceptable". At the same time, according to *Jurnalul Național*, the Italian authorities were preparing to expel not only the convicted criminals but any Romanian deemed by the Police as "dangerous". *Libertatea* published new updates: "Some sources indicate that Roma Mayor has an entire fleet of planes ready to bring all the 5,000 illegal Romanian residents home as soon as possible. The first 100 were embarked last night having Bucharest as their final destination". The same information was published by *Evenimentul Zilei* on November 5th along with new information: "Italian authorities estimate that by Christmas some 5,000 Romanians having committed crimes in Italy and who are already in Police records may be expelled to Romania".

The expulsion decree in the context of EU legislation as well as the domestic effects of the mass expulsion of Romanian citizens were debated by *Jurnalul Național* and *Evenimentul Zilei* even from November 3rd.

b) Expelled Romanians. According to the reports in the three newspapers, the first people targeted by the expulsion were Romanians of Roma ethnicity. Nonetheless, the first police raids took place in Roma communities at the outskirts of several Italian cities. On November 4th, *Jurnalul Național* informed its readers that the Prefects in various cities from Italy started to sign orders for Romanians' expulsion, while *Libertatea* and *Evenimentul Zilei* provided information about the first four citizens who were expelled and who arrived in Bucharest. "*The expelling is on*" was the title of a news feature in *Libertatea* reporting that the "first four Romanians were expelled from Italy on Friday and reached Romania after midnight". "The first four Roma expelled from Italy arrived" *Evenimentul Zilei* reported.

The expulsions topic was covered again by *Jurnalul Național* in the fifth and sixth day from the beginning of the crisis of Romanian immigrants in Italy. The protest of the Italian criminal lawyers and the position of the European Commission were included in the reports dedicated to the issue.

The declarations of Romanian President Traian Băsescu regarding the expulsions as published by Italian media were published in *Evenimentul Zilei* on November 6th (quoting La Stampa, ANSA, Corriere della Sera, and La Repubblica).

c) Romanians as victims of racist and xenophobic attacks in Italy and Romanians as criminals. On the third day the newspapers started the series of articles on the *honest decent Romanians victims of racist attacks* initiated by extremist groups in Italy, closely followed by articles on *Romanian criminals* who attacked and robbed Italian citizens. "The rising anger stirred by Roma man Mailat" lead to attacks against Romanians living in Italy *Evenimentul Zilei* reported on November 3rd quoting *La Repubblica*. "Two Romanians attacked an Italian in order to steal his mobile phone", *Evenimentul Zilei* reported in the same article quoting *Liberta* newspaper.

The same day, *Libertatea* wrote about the map of "the most dangerous camps at the outskirts of Rome", documented and published by *Il Tempo*. "Among these there is the camp at Ponte Mammolo whereby 150 Roma people from Romania live, this being considered to be the main problem confronted by Police and Carabinieri in Rome".

On its turn, *Jurnalul Național* wrote about the Italian journalists at *La Repubblica* who "concluded 2007 was a black year with respect to Romanians' violence and

published a chronicle on the topic". The newspaper published along a list of various murders and crimes allegedly committed by Romanian citizens. Against this background the permissive legislation in Italy was identified as one of the reasons why foreign criminals were choosing Italy. The information above was accompanied by a paragraph upon the xenophobic attacks against Romanians (quoting ANSA news agency and *Corriere della Sera*).

The Italian press also published *the opinions of the respectable Romanians* affected by the crisis stirred by Nicolae Mailat deed. The electronic edition of *Libertatea* on Saturday (November 3rd) quoted these declarations: "Italian media also covered the reactions of the Romanians who make an honest living: "They banish us because of a crazy man. It's not fair", a Romanian woman said. According to a street interview published by *Il Giornale* and quoted by *Jurnalul Național* on November 5th, the Romanian interviewees pleaded for the Romanian minority not to be identified with the criminals.

Also as a follow up to racist reactions in Italy, "the king of gypsies" Florin Cioabă, together with Ardeal Bishop wrote a letter to the Italian Prime Minister urging the authorities "not to judge an ethnic community, let alone an entire nation based on the deeds of one robber", *Libertatea* wrote in its edition on November 6th.

The reports on the arrests, attacks and robberies committed by Romanian citizens (Romanian criminals) and those on the Italians' violent reactions following the campaign against Romanian citizens (Romanians-victims) were published ongoing until the sixth day of the crisis by all three newspapers. *Libertatea* also wrote about "a public gathering against Romanians" organized in Rome by an extremist group. The newspapers kept on quoting *La Repubblica*, *La Stampa*, and *Il Tempo*. One particular case among the others was reported by all three newspapers. A device exploded in front of a restaurant owned by a Romanian woman as she had the same name as Mailat and the attackers thought they were related.

The wording "criminal Romanian – respectable Romanian" was also the basis of a special correspondence from Rome published by *Evenimentul Zilei* (November 5th) in an attempt to reflect the consequences of the crisis in Italy as perceived by two "different social categories seemingly separated by light years, both living in Italy's capital city under the general term of Romanians" and represented by the head of a group of strolling musicians who used to "pick pockets" in the trams and buses of Bucharest and the honest maid who worked all day long to make a living.

The reports highlighted the case of the Romanian football player Adrian Mutu, one of the prominent victims of the racist verbal attacks coming from the fans of Lazio Rome football team, especially "the fans in a xenophobic and extremist faction of Lazio supporters", who called him "shitty gypsy" and "piece of shit" (*Evenimentul Zilei*, *Libertatea*, November 4-5).

Under these circumstances, *Jurnalul Național* and *Evenimentul Zilei* published declarations of Italian authorities that took a stand and condemned the attacks of Italian citizens against Romanians. The Italian Foreign Affairs Minister Massimo D'Alema said "we will do everything in our power to fight crime as well as this kind of actions typical to racist groups" (*Jurnalul Național*, November 3rd).

d) *The status of Romanians in Italy.* Mailat case started the debate upon the Romanians abroad that worked illegally, have no rights or social securities. The newspapers interviewed members of the associations and groups representing Romanians abroad with a view to find out about the problems Romanians confronted with in Italy. Eugen Terteleac, President of the Association of Romanians in Italy declared for *Evenimentul Zilei* on November 6th that the number of Romanians in Italy increased upon Romania's accession to the EU, but that many of them were working illegally (only 20% of the Romanians had all the legal papers before the 1st of January 2007). Given the situation, the Romanian Government was urged to undertake "concrete measures" regarding the Romanians abroad (with a special focus on those residing illegally).

3.3. Authorities. The information regarding the decision of Italian authorities to pass the expulsion decree, the cooperation between Romanian and Italian authorities, the official declarations contributed to the development of the journalistic discourse towards the "Romanian immigrants in Italy" and the problems confronted or stirred by them in Italy and abroad.

a) *Cooperation between Romanian and Italian authorities.* Actions aimed at fighting the crimes committed by Romanian citizens. Along with the account on Mailat deed and on the expulsion decree issued by Italian authorities, *Jurnalul Național* on the first day announced the creation of a joint commission "bringing together representatives of the Ministry of Justice, the Ministry of Home Affairs and the National Board for Roma that would work with Italian officials with a view to prevent further crimes".

Evenimentul Zilei covered the same topic the following day: "the crimes committed by Romanians in Italy lead to the undertaking of exceptional measures" and added details about the cooperation between Romanian and Italian authorities aimed at fighting crime in the long run. Such measures included the agreement signed by Romanian Justice Minister Tudor Chiuariu and his Italian peer Clemente Mastella in order to "secure the transfer into Romanian penitentiaries of some 100 Romanians convicted in Italy". The same feature had the subtitle "*We give officers and take back the criminals*" and reported on the Romanian officers sent to Rome to help Italian officers to investigate the murder Romulus Mailat was accused of.

Communication Prodi-Tăriceanu. Also in the first day of reporting, *Evenimentul Zilei* and *Jurnalul Național* wrote about the phone conversation between the prime ministers of Romania and Italy who had agreed upon "an action plan to fight the violence".

b) *Raids of Italian police in the communities of Romanians/Roma.* During the six days subject to the monitoring, *Jurnalul Național*, *Evenimentul Zilei* and *Libertatea* especially reported on the raids undertaken by Italian police to identify Romanian criminals. According to Italian media quoted by the three newspapers, the Carabinieri granted special attention to "Roma camps" in several parts of Italy. One of the results of these actions was the eviction of the camp nearby Tor di Quinto, "the place of the tragedy" (*Libertatea*, November 3rd). At times, nationality was mixed up with ethnicity: "Yesterday the police in all Italy undertook raids in the illegal immigrants' camps. In Bari, in South-East of the country they found 30 kilograms of hashish and numerous weapons in the possession of *Romanians*. Thus, they decided to immediately demolish the camp.

The destination of the *gypsies* after being evicted is not known” (*Libertatea*, November 3rd).

Jurnalul Național announced that the “killing of the Italian woman aged 47, wife of a navy officer, by a *Roma man of Romanian citizenship* determined the authorities in Rome to demolish the gypsy camps in the Italian capital and start sending back the Romanians deemed to be dangerous” (November 4th), while *Evenimentul Zilei* wrote that” nine individuals [accused of blackmail and theft of electric power] were arrested in Rome today within a Carabinieri operation in a Roma camp” (November 6th).

c) Measures undertaken by Romanian authorities for Romanians living in Italy.

On the fourth day of the crisis in Italy and against the background of the first raids undertaken by Italian police, *Evenimentul Zilei* and *Jurnalul Național* wrote about the request addressed by Premier Tăriceanu to the ministers of Home Affairs, Labor and Justice, urging them to present a set of proposals “to counteract the expulsion of Romanians from Italy”. *Evenimentul Zilei* informed on the request the Romanian authorities sent to the Italian ones to take measures against xenophobic and racist deeds. Furthermore *Evenimentul Zilei* reported on the first measures announced by Tăriceanu Cabinet aimed at protecting the Romanians in Italy against reprisals and xenophobic reactions. *Libertatea* published President Băsescu’s declaration stating the *Roma issue* belonged to the entire European Union delivered during a meeting with the ministers of Home Affairs, Labor and Justice at Cotroceni Palace.

Libertatea and *Jurnalul Național* announced that the Government will grant free legal assistance “on public money” to Romanians that will be requested by Italian authorities to leave the country. *Libertatea* on November 5th wrote about the visit undertaken by the Prime Minister in Italy with a view “to release the tension”.

However, President Băsescu complained about the lack of involvement of Romanian diplomats in the settlement of the problems confronted by Romanians abroad in a show broadcasted by the public television and posted by *Jurnalul Național* in its electronic edition on November 5th.

d) Romanian authorities criticize Italian authorities. From the beginning of the crisis, Prime Minister Tăriceanu delivered a public speech criticizing Italian authorities for their political and “propaganda oriented” reactions. “Premier Tăriceanu suggested that the problem of Romanian criminals in Italy could be solved if Italian authorities provided some jobs for Romanian citizens already residing on their territory...” (*Jurnalul Național*, November 1st). “The Romanian Premier said the crisis should be managed first and foremost by Italian authorities” according to *Evenimentul Zilei*. Same information in the Premier’s speech was published by *Libertatea* as well.

Defense Minister Teodor Meleşcanu was the second member of the Government to criticize the measures taken by Italian authorities targeting Romanians in Italy as a follow up to a “blamable deed”. “We cannot accept such discriminations against all Romanians due to the blamable deeds of one man (*Evenimentul Zilei*, November 3rd).

e) Journalists’ criticism towards Romanian authorities. From the first days of reporting, the critics made by the journalists at *Evenimentul Zilei* in the context of the crisis in Italy targeted the legislation gaps and the legal system deficiencies (i.e. “omissions” of the judges) enabling criminally prosecuted offenders such as Nicolae Mailat to be pardoned and to leave for Western European countries. In addition, the Romanian authorities seemed to be unaware of the economic and social problems that made the Romanians leave abroad, according to the journalists of the same newspaper: “The action plans cannot have any effect as long as the people in charge in Bucharest

don't even know the real causes of the situation. Several weeks ago Foreign Affairs Minister Adrian Cioroianu said the "stress caused by the distance from home" is the cause of crime. Nothing though about the poverty that makes them leave or about the wretched living conditions there or about the measures that might motivate them to work in the country".

f) Interviews with authorities from Romania. *Evenimentul Zilei* published two interviews in connection with Mailat case/the crisis of Romanians in Italy – one with Foreign Affairs Minister Adrian Cioroianu (November 2nd) and one with Defense Minister Teodor Meleşcanu. The interviewer of Minister Cioroianu led the dialogue towards the criminal immigrants' expulsion decree passed by Italian Government, the measures taken by Romanian authorities (Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Romania's Embassy in Rome) to settle the issue of Romanian criminals in Italy and impact of the decree upon the respectable citizens living in Italy.

3.4. Other topics covered by the reports published in the context of Mailat case:

a) Statistics about crime in Italy. Romanians in Italy "are the champions" of voluntary manslaughter, sexual attacks or shoplifting, *Evenimentul Zilei* reported on November 2nd. The following day, the same newspaper provided data in support of the statement above: "according to the Italian Home Affairs Ministry, 2,679 (75.3%) of the 3,557 foreigners arrested in Rome from the beginning of the years are Romanians. Most of them are Roma ethnics dealing with petty thefts".

b) Online forum. The second day from the incident, *Evenimentul Zilei* and *La Repubblica* decided to open an online forum for their readers to debate on Mailat case and the crisis of Romanian immigrants in Italy.

c) Realitatea TV initiative. *Evenimentul Zilei* on November 2nd reported on the initiative of *Realitatea* TV station to invite Bucharest residents in Universităţii Square to express their solidarity with the family of Giovanna Reggiani. "Priests held memorial service for Giovanna Reggiani in Universităţii Square of Bucharest" (*Evenimentul Zilei*, November 3rd).

d) Mailat case in British and Italian media. Five days from the beginning of the crisis, *Evenimentul Zilei* published reports from British and Italian media. British newspapers discussed the situation of Romanian immigrants in Italy, particularly the situation of Roma people and the "anti-immigrants" feelings that became rather acute after the "brutal death of a woman". One of the British papers pointed out that the extensive coverage of murders, rapes and robberies in Italian media resulted in national hysteria.

"The statements inciting to racial hatred are punished by the law, *La Stampa* newspaper reminded, stating that if they were to be judged upon the declarations they made in the last days many Italian politicians should be sent to jail". "*La Stampa*" highlights the fact that the murder in Tor di Quinto was committed by Nicolae Mailat and not by 22 million of Romanians". Statistics and surveys undertaken by Italian newspapers were published during those days. "*Corriere della Sera*" released its own survey indicating that 81% of the Italians don't like the gypsies" ... "the survey revealed

that people don't know how many Roma are in Italy and when they make assumptions the numbers are highly exaggerated. On the other hand, the newspaper noticed that the Italian population tends to believe all Roma people come from abroad, ignoring the fact that Italy has its own community of gypsies”.

e) Reactions from the political groups and Romanian organizations in Italy. Starting the fourth day, *Evenimentul Zilei* and *Jurnalul Național* published declarations from the Party of Romanians in Italy (PIR) and the Association of Romanians in Italy (ARI) warning upon the anti-immigrant feelings and opinions and urging Italian and Romanian authorities to take measures to counteract such displays. ARI criticized the absence of Romanian authorities in Italy, particularly the absence of the Romanian Foreign Affairs Minister and sent an open letter to President Traian Băsescu inviting him to come to Italy (*Jurnalul Național*, November 4th). On November 6th, *Evenimentul Zilei* published an interview with the Migrants Officer from FENEAL-UIL Confederation who said that some Romanians “started feeling the effects of the expulsion decree”. The Romanians who worked without labor contracts and who were promised legal papers by their managers were laid off. Others were questioned on the street by the Carabinieri or they had to deal with a change in the attitude of their Italian co-workers.

f) The Romanian Conservative Party initiated two actions in this period in the context of the crisis in Italy. On November 5th *Evenimentul Zilei* reported on the initiative of the Conservative Party to table a bill stipulating “the interdiction to leave the country for up to 10 years for the Romanians who served time in jail”. *Libertatea* on Tuesday, November 6th reported on the march organized by the same party in front of the Italian embassy: “the march warns upon the discriminatory and xenophobic treatment Romanian citizens in Italy are subjected to”.

g) Adrian Cioroianu. On November 5th *Libertatea* wrote about the press release signed by several Romanian NGOs asking for the resignation of Minister Adrian Cioroianu after the latter had declared that “Romanian citizens committing crimes abroad should be deported to the Egyptian desert”. *Jurnalul Național* covered the issue on November 6th. On the same day, *Evenimentul Zilei* published the declarations match between Premier Tăriceanu and President Băsescu regarding the public statement of the Foreign Affairs Minister.

i) Corneliu Vadim Tudor in Italy. In the last day included in the monitoring period, the media announced the involvement of PRM leader Corneliu Vadim Tudor in this case. He was “appointed by the Parliament to get in touch with Italian authorities in order to settle the immigrants crisis”. In order to point out the politician was not the best choice for this mission, *Evenimentul Zilei* reminded its readers that “Vadim Tudor has always promoted a nationalist rhetoric in what concerns the Romanians of Roma ethnicity” and published his statement in order to support their comment: “I say this aloud as Vice-president of the Senate and Chair of the Parliamentary Romania-Italy Friendship Committee: the Italians are absolutely right. I am just asking them not to use the word Romanian, because that scum is not Romanian, but Gypsy”.

j) Miscellanea with little or no relevance. Starting day 6, the three dailies published stories on topics with various degrees of relevance for the crisis of the Romanians living in Italy. *Evenimentul Zilei* found in Cluj an Italian who owned a pizza restaurant, who used to work as police officer in Italy and who had been living in Romania for 10 years; they asked for his opinion on the events in Italy. On the same day

Jurnalul Național reported that “the organs of a Romanian woman who died in Italy saved the lives of three Sicilians – two men and a woman”. The least relevant or not at all relevant issue in the context of the crisis was published by *Libertatea*. The one paragraph news with the subtitle “*Italian shot in hunt at Arad*” reported on a 43 years old Italian who was accidentally shot during a hunt organized by AJVPS Arad”.

4. Side-slips from the journalist’s mission.

Comments and observations

The mission of the press is first and foremost to accurately inform the audience. In some cases the authors of the articles provided information that proved to be contradictory from one day to another in the same newspaper, they used general descriptions for particular situations or published the results of “obscure” statistics (without data for the identification of the source or about the sample of respondents etc.).

Nevertheless, part of the articles violated various ethical journalistic principles (i.e. the presumption of innocence or associating one’s ethnicity with crime).

Contradictions in the same newspaper. The electronic edition of *Evenimentul Zilei* on November 4th published contradictory information: the first report on the funeral of Giovanna Reggiani stated the ceremony was attended by *thousands of people* and “some shouted slogans against Italian authorities and Romanian immigrants”. Later on the same day, *Evenimentul Zilei* published an updated account stating “the ceremony was attended by *some 200 people - relatives, friends as well as passers by* impressed by the tragedy suffered by Reggiani family”.

Contradictory statistics and data. On November 6th, *Evenimentul Zilei* published an interview with the President of the Association of Romanians in Italy who argued there were 220 Romanians imprisoned in Italy. The information published three days before by the same newspaper (different author, though) contradicted the interview: “However, according to the Italian Home Affairs Ministry, 2,679 (75.3%) of the 3,557 foreigners arrested in Rome from the beginning of the years are Romanians. Most of them are *Roma ethnics dealing with petty thefts*”. (November 3rd, “Mailat got to Italy due to poor legislation”).

“Moral panic” (information meant to induce panic due to the extent of the consequences described in the newspaper; i.e. 5,000 Romanians expelled in less than two months).

Libertatea, November 3rd: “*Some sources* indicate that Roma Mayor has an entire fleet of planes ready to bring all the 5,000 illegal Romanian residents home as soon as possible. The first 100 were embarked last night having Bucharest as their final destination”.

Jurnalul Național, November 3rd: “Italian authorities in Rome, Milan, Naples, Turin, and Florence have already started counting the Romanians they want to expel and reached several thousands. *In Rome only according to Police and Carabinieri calculations there are some 5,000 Romanians likely to be expelled*”.

Evenimentul Zilei, November 5th: “Italian authorities estimate that *by Christmas some 5,000 Romanians having committed crimes in Italy and who are already in Police records may be expelled to Romania*” (an impressive figure for such a short period of time). “By Wednesday, the six could be followed by other 150”.

False information/associating one's ethnicity with violence. *Libertatea* was the single newspaper to identify Mailat's mother as the eyewitness even from the first day of reporting on the issue. The second day, *Libertatea* continued to display the same information and, moreover, stated that "the Roma who lived in the same wretched camp in Tor di Quinto [were] *outraged that the old woman betrayed her son and said they would find her and kill her*". The quote visibly discredited the members of this ethnic community by associating them as a group with violent actions. The investigation indicated the eyewitness of the crime as being a woman living in the same camp with Nicolae Mailat.

Dramatic nuances in informative features associated with violation of ethical principles. "A horrific violent deed committed by a Romanian gypsy upon a 47 years old Italian woman that now lies in deep coma once again brought our country on the front page of Italian newspapers, while the TV news bulletins start with this *atrocitiy*. The victim's skull is crashed, her body is badly hit and her survival chances are close to 0, according to the doctors. IPJ Sibiu stated the *gypsy Nicolae Romulus Mailat killed in Italy after being pardoned in Romania*" (*Libertatea*, November 2nd).

Generalizations and vague wordings in informative features: "The public opinion in Italy is *outraged* by the numerous violent crimes committed by our fellow countrymen. 'Get the Romanians out of our country', said the Italians interviewed by journalists" (*Libertatea*, November 2nd).

"*Italia* is mourning. *It is still in shock* after the horrendous deed committed by a Roma man from Romania who had allegedly raped and beaten to death a 47 years old woman" (...) "Kick them out as fast as possible' or 'Punish them' *said the Italian citizens to their authorities*". (*Libertatea*, November 3rd).

A sentence without any other background data concluded an article on expulsions published by *Libertatea* (November 4th): "According to Italian police statistics, the Romanians 'lead' the top of serious crimes".

Biased headlines. "Unbelievable! The Romanians Just Won't Stop!" "Less than 24 hours since the funeral of Giovanna Reggiani, other Romanians committed crimes in Rome. Two of them tried to rob a couple on Saturday night in Pincio district in Rome" (*Libertatea*, November 5th).

"*Mailat's Fellows: "We Won't Be Able To Steal In Italy No More!"*" (*Evenimentul Zilei*, November 6th) is the headline of a report published initially by "Corriere della Sera" on the Roma community nearby Tor di Quinto train station. According to the article, the statement quoted in the title belonged to a man in the crowd gathered around the reporters.

"*Rome – Another Romanian Terrifies Italy*" is the headline of the first article on Mailat case published by *Jurnalul Național* (November 1st).

"*The Gypsy Issue*" (*Libertatea*, November 2nd) is the headline of a column addressing the issue of crime in Romania.

5. Commentary&Analysis Column

The “Mailat case” and the crisis it stirred were addressed in the opinion columns of the three newspapers. During the six days, most columnists at *Evenimentul Zilei* focused their discourse towards the Romanian authorities and their actions aimed at preventing crime or at managing a crisis occurred outside Romania. The criticism was predominant in the four columns on the topic identified during the monitoring period. The Justice issues and the laws allowing criminals to stay out of jail and leave the country were the main reasons of discontent. Also, in the context of the reports on Mailat case the columnists started analyzing the situation of Romanian immigrants and their image abroad.

Jurnalul Național published a column on tolerance, extremism and prejudice in the context of Mailat case, addressing both Italians’ attitude towards the Romanian immigrants following the murder in Tor di Quinto and the unresolved social issues of Romanians against the background of Romania’s accession to the European Union. The author of the column raised the question of Italian and Romanian media professionalism, given that they did not observe Nicolae Mailat presumption of innocence and the “hysteria in Italy [that] resulted into serious violations of human rights”.

The issue of crime in Romania (especially the “gypsy-related” one) was addressed by *Libertatea* in the only column identified in the six days of the monitoring period and entitled “The Gypsy Issue”. The column criticized the Romanian authorities: “The profoundly culpable torpor of the authorities only made the [crime] phenomenon worse”.

6. Conclusions:

In less than a week the "Mailat case" underwent a spectacular development, from the report of an alleged crime perpetrated by a Romanian citizen in Italy to the description of Romanian-Italian relations as violent and hostile.

Romanian and Italian journalists turned a crime into a crime phenomenon, an EU national into an immigrant and one individual into an ethnic community. All these transformations were generated by an unprecedented crisis.

Reporting on "Mailat case" can be seen as an impotent journalistic performance. The domestic newspapers gathered their information almost exclusively from Italian media.

In the first days of November 2007 the Romanian audience learnt about expulsions, thousands of expelled people or more or less friendly messages sent from two parts of Europe. When they missed data about the murder suspect investigation or the measures taken by the authorities in Bucharest, the newspapers published statistics placing the Romanians in the top of crime in Italy.

The Romanian-Italian crisis provided the ideal framework to bring into the collective consciousness the image of the "respectable" Romanian, a victim of Italian xenophobia and/or racism. The newspapers also reported on the diplomatic blunders of Romanian officials and the propaganda actions of the parties in Bucharest within the same context.

The fast pace of events resulted into several regrettable side-slips that characterized the nature of the journalistic materials: violating Nicolae Mailat's presumption of innocence and the constant association of Roma ethnicity with crime.

By the time the current analysis was published, there was no final Court decision in the case of Nicolae Romulus Mailat.