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PRESS RELEASE

Embargoed until May 10, 2006

Contact in Washington, DC
Eric Rosenthal – 202.361.9195
erosenthal@mdri.org

Laurie Ahern – 202.361.1402
lahern@mdri.org

ROMANIA VIOLATES RIGHTS OF INFANTS AND CHILDREN WITH DISABILITIES

WASHINGTON, DC – May 10, 2006 – A human rights group, Mental Disability Rights International (MDRI), has found children with disabilities hidden and wasting away, near death, in Romania's adult psychiatric facilities. A report released today, *Hidden Suffering: Romania's Segregation and Abuse of Infants and Children with Disabilities*, describes teenagers weighing no more than 27 pounds. Some children are tied down with bedsheets, their arms and legs twisted and left to atrophy.

Despite Romanian government claims that it has ended the placement of babies in institutions, MDRI found infants languishing in a medical facility so poorly staffed that the children never leave their cribs. Many of these children have no identity papers. Officially, they do not exist.

These shocking revelations come at a time when Romania, in its effort to join the European Union (EU), is under pressure to reduce the number of children in institutions. Romanian officials admitted to MDRI that they had no idea how many children with disabilities are in adult facilities.

"We call on the government of Romania and the EU to put a stop to these abuses," said Eric Rosenthal, Executive Director of MDRI. "These are Romania's most vulnerable citizens. The inhumane and degrading treatment that they are forced to endure is intolerable and violates international human rights law."

MDRI is an international human rights and advocacy organization dedicated to the full participation in society of people with mental disabilities worldwide. For more information, visit www.mdri.org.

For a copy of the report, video clips and photographs contact MDRI at 202.296.0800.