

ROMANIA'S HUGE PROTESTS CAUSE RIFTS AMONG FAMILIES, FRIENDS

BUCHAREST: Video editor Mihnea Lupan lives just around the corner from his mother, but their views on the massive anti-corruption protests shaking Romania are miles apart. Since late January, when tens of thousands first took to the streets to protest a government decree that decriminalized some official misconduct, Lupan and his mother, Valentina, have been at loggerheads. Fights over politics dominate their visits instead of home-cooked meals and pleasantries. "Don't speak

to me like I'm an idiot! You are what you are today, thanks to me," Valentina Lupan, a retired architect, shouted at her 35-year-old son during an emotionally charged two-way that started within minutes of his entering the apartment where his parents and aunt live.

The demonstrations, the largest in Romania since a 1989 revolution led to the execution of the communist leader, have been a nightly occurrence for three consecutive weeks now.

During that time, they have exposed a sharp generational divide between citizens who grew up, built careers and started families under communism and those who came of age a decade after the country moved to a free market economy and a multiparty system.

Most of the protesters are on the younger side. Through travel, jobs at foreign companies and the internet, they feel closer to the West than their parents. —AP



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