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By ELAN MILLER

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Article's topics: Nazis, Romania

A Romanian public official caused a scandal by sporting a Nazi uniform in public at a local fashion show on Sunday evening.

Radu Mazare, mayor of the Black Sea port city of Constanta, paraded publicly down the catwalk as a fully attired, goose-stepping Nazi officer. Mazare, 41, was joined by his son, who was dressed in a similar suit.



Constanta mayor Radu Mazare. Photo: AP

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Wearing a Nazi uniform is prohibited by law in Romania. The country became a German ally in 1940, but switched sides shortly before the end of World War II. Romania denied participating in the Holocaust until 2004, when it acknowledged the findings of an international commission that the country's establishment had overseen the deaths of up to 380,000 Jews in territories under its control.

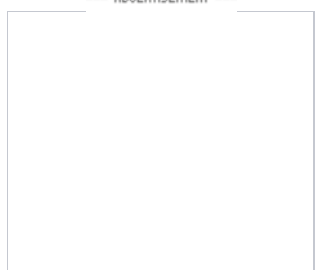
The uniform incident sparked a furious reaction from Jewish and pro-democracy groups over the weekend, according to Reuters.

On Monday, a local watchdog, the Center for Monitoring and Combating Anti-Semitism in Romania, sent a letter to the country's attorney-general urging an investigation of the mayor's behavior for breaking the law and instigating a child to follow his example, "educating him to treat the current law with contempt."

The letter exhorted Attorney-General Laura Codruta Kovesi to take the necessary measures to examine and censure Mazare's actions.

Maximilian Katz, director of the organization, reminded Kovesi that Mazare was a state employee and was therefore duty-bound not only to respect the state's laws, but to see that they were implemented. He warned that this action could lead some people to believe that wearing Nazi uniforms and "marching at a goose's pace" was legal and even fashionable in Romania.

"Mr. Radu Mazare involving his son in



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this event is an act of civic irresponsibility that needs to be treated as such," said Katz.

In his defense, Mazare said that the uniform had no swastikas and was the uniform of a German infantry general and had nothing to do with the SS.

"I was inspired from the *Valkyrie* movie... I wanted to dress like a Wehrmacht general because I've always liked this uniform, and admired the rigorous organization of the German army," the newspaper *Evenimentul Zilei* quoted him as saying, according to Reuters.

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Dr. Efraim Zuroff, director of the Simon Wiesenthal Center office in Jerusalem, slammed Mazare's actions as "disgraceful."

Zuroff told *The Jerusalem Post* that the Wiesenthal Center was "appalled by this totally inappropriate display," and stated his astonishment that a public official would act in this manner.

"It's appalling for several reasons. First of all, there's the uniforms. Then he took his son with him - hardly the kind of education a child should be receiving. And that he's an elected public figure only serves to makes this worse," he said.

Zuroff explained that this kind of behavior "has to be dealt with - there have been appeals already to the Romanian authorities - to be honest, we are all in favor of someone like that resigning his post."

Mazare is no stranger to controversy, and is known for his public acts of extravagance. He has also been investigated for corruption.

Despite the Mayor's colorful character, Zuroff stated that he could not accept Mazare's actions.

"It's an insult to victims of the Shoah, and an insult to all people with moral integrity and knowledge of history," he said.

Jerusalem Post staff contributed to this report.

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