

## INTERNATIONAL NEWS

# The family that never departs from the airport

**CARMIOLA IONESCU**  
in Bucharest

FOR MOST Romanians, the world has grown rapidly since their country joined the European Union. For the Mogos family, however, the horizons have never been narrower.

Confined to a small room in the cargo area of Bucharest's Henri Coanda airport, they can see passengers and planes coming and going with increasing frequency as the former Soviet bloc country plays a growing part in the modern world.

For five years, Anisoara Mogos, 54, and three of her children – now all in their twenties – have lived in this dingy corner of the airport, a diplomatic no-man's-land, after a bizarre wrangle over a failed asylum claim.

For most of that time her husband, Marin, 57, shared the small room with table, fridge and cooker, a small television and DVD player.

But earlier this month, despairing of ever escaping their legal limbo, he hanged himself. The day before, officials of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees had said they could not help him.

Mrs Mogos said: "Marin gave up fighting when he realised there was no legal way to get out of this. He could not take it any more."

The family fled Romania seeking a better life in 1990, soon after the fall of the dictator, Nicolae Ceausescu.

They renounced their citizenship in the hope that it would help them win asylum in Germany. They claimed that as gypsies they were persecuted and that their children would have no proper education or jobs. "In Germany we felt welcome, had found work and a

home," said Mrs Mogos. She had a job as a cleaner and all her five children went to German schools.

But their asylum claim was rejected – along with the claims of 1,000 others who had also renounced Romanian citizenship. In 2002, they were told they would be repatriated. Two of their children, married to Germans, were allowed to stay, but Dorina, now 20, Gabriela, 23 and Gheorghe, 22, were seized with their parents and deported.

Most of the 1,000 returned to Romania agreed to accept a new status as "tolerated persons", with only limited access to state benefits and no guarantee of getting a new passport. But the Mogos family refused to accept that condition, which meant that, under Romanian law, they were not permitted to set foot beyond the airport. Nor, without passports, could they leave again for Germany.

Mrs Mogos said: "If we accepted the offer to be a tolerated person it would mean we could never return to Germany, so we refused."

Since then, the family has been allowed to leave the airport only four times, on legal matters related to their attempt to return to Germany. An appeal to the European Court of Human Rights was rejected in 2004.

Mrs Mogos said: "We wash in a sink. My children send us money for food from Germany. It is desolate and depressing. There is nothing to do all day."

But Nicolae Ene, the senior airport police officer, said: "They limit themselves by refusing any legal connection with the Romanian state. More than once we have brought in psychiatrists to help the family. We believe they simply do not want to get out of the situation."

## Legal limbo

Anisoara Mogos and her three children, from left, Gabriela, Dorina and Gheorghe, are stuck at Bucharest airport in a bizarre asylum row

