

## Romania, tragedy in public hospital. Pope Francis, “pray for the victims.” Minister Tataru: “depoliticize Health Care”

Ten were killed and seven wounded by a fire that broke out on the evening of Saturday November 14 at the COVID-19 intensive care unit of a public hospital in the city of Piatra Neamt, Romania. **Pope Francis** recalled the tragic event in yesterday's Angelus prayer: "I express my closeness and pray for the victims," he said. **A courageous doctor.** The Patriarch of the Romanian Orthodox Church **Daniel** sent "a paternal message of condolences and consolation to the families of the deceased patients, their families, friends, and the entire medical team who treated them and tried to save their lives". "In these moments charged with suffering and anxiety," he added, "we pray to God for the eternal rest of the victims and for the speedy recovery of the wounded." The Roman Catholic Archbishop of Bucharest, Msgr. Aurel Perca, sent a message of sympathy and prayer for the deceased, remembering the on-call doctor Catalin Denciu, "who risked his life to save his patients." "This great heroic gesture reminds us of the Christ's words: 'There is no greater love than to lay down one's life for one's friends.'" **Patients and staff.** The fire is believed to have been triggered by a short circuit in a room with eight coronavirus intubated patients. Unfortunately, despite attempts by the medical staff, these patients perished in the fire. Two other patients, already in critical conditions in the adjacent room, died in the emergency room. Two doctors and some nurses who rescued the patients suffered burns, also because their medical clothing was caught in the flames. One of the doctors with severe burns was taken for treatment to the Regina Astrid Hospital in Brussels, Belgium, on Sunday morning. Denciu, the "hero doctor" as he is now called in Romania, is specialized in intensive care. He is 48 years old, married - his wife is also a doctor, gynaecologist - . They have two children.



[The fire in Piatra Neamt's hospital in Romania](#)

[evoked another fire that broke out five years ago in a Bucharest nightclub, Colectiv, which killed 64 people and injured more than a hundred. Incompetence and corruption, that facilitated the outbreak of the Colectiv blaze, are now being blamed as a cause of the fire by Romanian media outlets and public figures.](#) On Sunday November 15, **Klaus Iohannis**, President of Romania, declared: "This terrible incident reminds us once again - should there be a need for it - that a radical reform of the public health system in Romania is urgently needed." **The management question.** In a speech on Romanian public television TVR, the Minister of Health **Nelu Tataru**, stressed that the management of Romanian hospitals should be de-politicized. In fact, in the past 12 months, the hospital of Piatra Neamt, which is under the administration of the city council, has been run by eight managers, whose appointment is believed to have been motivated by political criteria rather than professional skills, some of them being in charge of the hospital for 3, 6 or 16 days, in a period marked by a major health emergency due to the coronavirus pandemic. "Our healthcare system has been in a dormant state for 30 years. We now need to de-politicize the public health administration as a whole", said **Romanian Minister Tataru.** Executives "must take an exam in Bucharest and must be evaluated on an annual basis. Should they not respond to the requests, they must resign". **Fire prevention.** Furthermore, the Minister recalled that during the pandemic Romania's healthcare system "was necessarily upgraded", and that he requested that the installation of new medical equipment be accompanied by inspections of technical infrastructure. In the meantime, all public hospitals in Romania are being inspected, and it seems that several facilities are operating without fire prevention certification. The intensive care unit of the hospital of Piatra Neamt was reorganized the day the fire

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[broke out, without the necessary authorizations.](#)

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