

URGENT ACTION

ROMA FAMILIES AT RISK OF BEING MADE HOMELESS

Fifty-three Roma families are facing imminent forced eviction in Belgrade, the capital of Serbia. They arrived in the settlement, in the Zemun municipality, between 1999 and 2000, having been internally displaced from Kosovo. Between 7 and 10 July they were served with orders to demolish their homes. They have not been offered any alternative housing and are at risk of homelessness.

The Ratko Mitrović settlement, also known as Grmeč, is an informal settlement in Zemun municipality, in the north-west of Belgrade. The settlement is situated between two railway lines on a narrow strip of land owned by the Serbian railway company. On 26 June, the Zemun municipal construction inspectors issued written demolition orders on the grounds that the homes had been built without construction permits. The written orders, served to the Roma families between 7 and 10 July, ordered them to demolish their homes within one day of receiving the order. Prior to this there had been no consultation at all with the community or notice that the orders were to be issued.

No demolitions have been carried out so far by the residents but the families have been told that if they do not, then the authorities will. It is unclear when the authorities will proceed. To date people living in Grmeč have not been offered any alternative accommodation, and will be made homeless if the demolition orders are enforced.

International human rights law and standards, to which Serbia is bound, require the authorities to immediately suspend the demolition orders. Before any further action is taken, the affected families should be genuinely consulted on possible alternatives and offered effective legal and procedural safeguards against the demolition of their homes and forced eviction, including adequate notice of eviction and the provision of adequate alternative accommodation for those who require it.

Amnesty International has repeatedly called on the Mayor of Belgrade, who oversees the work of the municipalities within the city, to ensure that no one is forcibly evicted. Forced evictions are illegal under international law.

Please write immediately in English, Serbian or your own language:

- Calling on the city authorities to suspend the demolition orders and to ensure that the Roma families living in the Grmeč settlement are not forcibly evicted;
- Urging the authorities to take immediate measures to identify alternatives to the planned demolitions or otherwise provide the affected households with adequate alternative housing, in accordance with international human rights standards, and in genuine consultation with the affected families;
- Calling on the authorities to adopt a law prohibiting forced evictions and ensure that lawful evictions are carried out in accordance with international standards, as set out in the UN Basic Principles and Guidelines on Development-based Evictions and Displacement, including the provision of adequate notice to all those affected.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS BEFORE 1 SEPTEMBER 2015 TO:

Minister for Construction, Transport and Infrastructure

Prof. dr. Zorana Mihajlović
Ministry of Construction, Transport and Infrastructure
Nemanjina 22-26
11000 Belgrade, Serbia
E-mail: kabinet@mgsi.gov.rs

Salutation: Dear Minister

Mayor of the City of Belgrade

Dr. Siniša Mali
Office of the Mayor
Dragoslava Jovanovića 2
11000 Belgrade, Serbia
Email: gradonacelnik@beograd.gov.rs

Salutation: Dear Mayor

And copies to:

Chairman of the Zemun Municipal Assembly
Dejan Matić
Magistratski trg 1
11080 Zemun, Serbia

E-mail: dejan.matic@zemun.rs

Salutation: Dear Chairman

Also send copies to diplomatic representatives accredited to your country. Please insert local diplomatic addresses below:

Name Address 1 Address 2 Address 3 Fax Fax number Email Email address Salutation Salutation

Please check with your section office if sending appeals after the above date.

**AMNESTY
INTERNATIONAL**



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ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

The Roma families have lived in the settlement since around 1999 to 2000, when they fled Kosovo after the end of the 1999 internal armed conflict between Serbs and Albanians. Following the end of the armed conflict, Roma in Kosovo were subjected to systematic and widespread abuses by Kosovo Albanians, including abduction, murder, rape and the destruction of property, on the basis that they had mainly lived in Serbian communities, and mostly spoke Serbian (see <https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/EUR70/004/2012/en/>).

Few of the thousands of Roma who fled Kosovo have found a durable solution. As internally displaced persons, they are extremely vulnerable, facing multiple forms of discrimination which restrict their ability to equal enjoyment of a range of fundamental rights, including the right to adequate housing. According to UNHCR, three quarters of the Roma IDP population in Serbia are “in need” today, with poverty and high unemployment levels affecting the community.

Forced evictions, illegal under international law, are evictions carried out without adequate notice and genuine consultation with those affected, without appropriate legal safeguards and without assurances of adequate alternative accommodation. Under international law binding on Serbia, including the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR), which guarantees the right to adequate housing, the authorities are prohibited from carrying out forced evictions, and must protect people from forced evictions.

Serbia is obliged to ensure that the affected families are provided with adequate alternative accommodation, and are not rendered homeless. Under international human rights law and standards, evictions may be carried out only as a last resort, once all other feasible alternatives have been explored in genuine consultation with the people affected. Evictions cannot be carried out until appropriate procedural and legal safeguards are in place. International standards make it clear that even in cases where the eviction is considered justified, it must be carried out in strict compliance with international human rights law.

Governments must also ensure that no one is made homeless or vulnerable to other human rights violations as a consequence of an eviction. Victims of violations must be provided with effective remedies including compensation for all losses and provision adequate alternative housing to those who cannot provide for themselves. These obligations extend to all tiers of government including city authorities.

The UN Basic Principles and Guidelines on Development-based Evictions and Displacement aim to provide a practical tool to assist states in developing policies, legislation, procedures and preventive measures to ensure that forced evictions do not take place, elaborate standards on how evictions should be carried out and provide effective remedies to those whose human rights have been violated, should prevention fail.

The Minister for Construction is also the Deputy Prime Minister in the current government, tasked with coordinating activities for the advancement of the situation of Roma in the country.

Name: fifty-three Roma families

Gender m/f: both

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