

URGENT ACTION

ROMANI FAMILIES MADE HOMELESS IN ALBANIA

Around 25 Romani families have been made homeless, after local authorities obliged them to dismantle the sheds in which they were living at a site in Tirana, Albania's capital.



Of 25 Romani families living at a site near the Artificial Lake in Tirana, at least seven have lived on this site for several years. The remaining 18 came to this site after leaving an informal settlement near Tirana Railway Station following attacks by non-Romani men from outside the settlement in February 2011. At the time the authorities undertook to renovate former military barracks for their use, but a year later reconstruction work has not yet started (see also UA: 32/12: <http://www.amnesty.org/en/library/info/EUR11/001/2012/en>).

The 25 families living at the Artificial Lake claim that on 21 January 2012 officials from Tirana Municipality came to the site and informed them verbally that they had to leave the site. Three days later the officials returned and told them to dismantle their sheds and leave or the authorities would bulldoze them. They therefore pulled down their sheds, wishing to preserve the materials (see photo above; copyright credit: SHKEJ). They were not provided with any alternative accommodation. On 27 January about 16 of these families, unable to find another site, returned to the Artificial Lake site and started to rebuild their sheds. However, they continue to risk imminent eviction.

It seems that none of the families was consulted or provided with adequate or formal notice of eviction. Under international law, evictions may be carried out only as a last resort, once other alternatives have been explored in genuine consultation with the affected communities. The authorities then have a duty to provide them with adequate notice. The authorities must ensure that no families are made homeless or vulnerable to the violation of other human rights as a consequence of eviction. This includes providing them with legal remedies, including provision of compensation for the destruction of their homes, possessions and loss of income. Evictions should not be carried out in winter.

PLEASE WRITE IMMEDIATELY in English or your own language urging the Mayor of Tirana and the Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities to:

- provide adequate housing for these families without further delay, after having duly consulted with them;
- ensure that any temporary accommodation is indeed temporary and does not become permanent, by providing the necessary financial and other resources for the renovation, as necessary, of permanent housing, to a standard that meets international standards for adequate housing;
- keep the families fully informed and updated on progress.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS BEFORE 15 MARCH 2012 TO:

Mayor of Tirana
Z.Lulzim Basha
Blvd. Dëshmorët e Kombit, Tirana,
Albania
Email: kabineti@tirana.gov.al
Salutation: Dear Mr Basha

Minister of Labour, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities
Z.Spiro KseraMinistër i Punës, Cështjeve Sociale dhe Shanseve te Barabarta
Rruga e Kavajës
Tirana, Albania
Email: spiroksera@yahoo.gr
Salutation: Dear Deputy Minister

Copies to:
Prime Minister
Prof. Dr. Sali Berisha
Kryetari i Këshillit të Ministrave
Bulevardi "Dëshmorët e Kombit" Nr. 1
1000 Tirana, Albania
Email: krveministri@km.gov.al

Formatted: French (France)

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

In April 2011 Amnesty International wrote to the Albanian Prime Minister to express its concern about conditions at a site at Babrru where some of the families who had left the informal settlement near Tirana Railway Station had been offered temporary shelter in tents by the authorities. Amnesty International stated that accommodation in tents did not meet the criteria for 'habitability' set out in General Comment 4 on Article 11.1. of the United Nations Committee on Economic Social and Cultural Rights (CESCR), which states that "Adequate housing must be habitable, in terms of providing the inhabitants with adequate space and protecting them from cold, damp, heat, rain, wind or other threats to health, ...". Amnesty International called on the competent authorities to engage in a genuine consultation with members of this Romani community to identify relocation sites and alternative housing which would comply with requirements under international human rights standards, and to ensure adequate housing to all these Romani families in a safe location.

The Albanian government has a duty to abide by international law including the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, ratified by Albania in 1991 (Article 11.1) and General Comment 4 on Article 11.1 of the United Nations Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (CESCR). Furthermore, Albanian has undertaken to fulfil the objectives of the "Decade of Roma Inclusion 2005-2015", an initiative of 12 European countries to improve the socio-economic status of Romani communities, and has adopted a (Albanian) National Strategy "For the improvement of the living conditions of the Roma minority".

Name: 25 Romani families living at a site near the Artificial Lake in Tirana
Gender m/f: both

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