

AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL PUBLIC STATEMENT

Index number: EUR 39/021/2013

22 October 2013

Romanian government is failing homeless Roma in Eforie Sud

More than 20 Romani families in the Agricola Street in Eforie Sud municipality, in south-east Romania, were forcibly evicted twice within two weeks. The second forced eviction occurred few days before Amnesty International, together with representatives of three Romani communities, delivered on 16 October over 25,000 signatures from 85 countries to the Prime Minister's office. The petition urged the Prime Minister to take concrete steps towards a prohibition of forced evictions and protect the right to adequate housing in Romanian legislation.

On 27 September, after being served a 7-day notice, over 100 Roma living in Agricola Street, half of them children, were forcibly evicted from the houses they have been living in for more than 20 years. The houses did not have construction authorisation, but local authorities had partially recognised that the families had some form of tenure rights. Some of the residents were registered and had identity documents stating their address as Agricola Street and they were connected to electricity and water.

More than 20 houses were demolished in less than an hour and the residents lost most of their possessions. Residents included many children, pregnant women and people with medical conditions. Most of them did not have enough time to gather their belongings, and the little they did manage to save was left in the rain and got destroyed as no alternative housing was provided to the families.

On 30 September, several of the evicted families were told to move temporarily into a dilapidated school building nearby. Amnesty International visited the building on 17 October and observed that it does not comply with adequate housing requirements. Over 20 people share one toilet and one tap with drinking water. The building has no heating, no cooking or washing facilities. Electricity is provided only between 7pm and 6am. The ceilings are leaking and falling apart, and the residents told Amnesty International that at night they stay awake to prevent their children being bitten by rats.

Seven other families that did not want to move into the dilapidated school building are currently squatting in an abandoned boarding school that is also inadequate. The ceilings and walls are leaking, just one water source is provided for all families. No security of tenure was provided in these alternative locations and the families are afraid that they might be evicted again in the spring.

The remaining families suffered a second forced eviction on 11 October when local authorities and the police demolished the shelters they improvised after the first eviction. Four of these families continue to remain at the location in extremely precarious conditions and without any alternative housing being offered to them.

Amnesty International is concerned that the recent forced eviction of over 20 Romani families in Eforie Sud adds to a long list of human rights violations documented by national and international organizations demonstrating the consequences of the failure of the Romanian government to outlaw this practice prohibited under international law.

In a meeting with Amnesty International on 15 October, the representatives of the Ministry of Labour, the Ministry of Regional Development and the Ministry of EU Funds admitted that forced evictions are indeed a problem in Romania. However, such acknowledgement has not been followed to date by the commitment to develop binding guidelines for local authorities that would oblige them to adopt safeguards against forced evictions.

Amnesty International is reiterating its call to the Romanian authorities to immediately take concrete steps to stop them and to ensure that all people, including Roma, can enjoy their right to adequate housing without discrimination.

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