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Ostrava Regional court quashes local authorities' plan to evict Roma families

In the decision made public last week, the Regional Court of Ostrava quashed on procedural grounds Ostrava city's local authorities plan to evict the residential buildings in Přednádraží neighbourhood, inhabited in August 2012 by over 300 Roma. The Regional Court held that the decision was not enforceable for a number of reasons, including a lack of clarity on who is responsible to carry it out.

Amnesty International is aware that the local authorities of Ostrava are developing a large scale project "to integrate socially excluded inhabitants" and aim to apply for EU structural funds. Amnesty International is calling on the local authorities to genuinely engage with disadvantaged Roma, including the affected families, to develop sustainable long-term housing solutions, including allocation of social housing.

BACKGROUND

In August of last year, Ostrava city attracted harsh criticism from international human rights organisations and local NGO when local authorities initiated the proceedings to evict the families.

The construction office delivered the eviction notice to the owner of the rented houses inhabited by the Roma, giving them just 24 hours to leave the premises voluntarily. If the inhabitants failed to leave, they had risked having the police enforce the eviction order.

A majority of residents eventually left the area and moved to dormitories, the only alternative housing provided by the local authorities, despite concerns over affordability and overcrowding. The rental price for a room in the dormitories was more than double what the families had been paying for a flat prior to the eviction.

The remaining 35 people who resisted the eviction have been living in uncertainty until now.

Since August 2012, Amnesty International, together with European Roma Rights Centre and Life Together, Ostrava-based NGO, have been campaigning against the eviction of the Roma families. The organizations have been calling on the local authorities to engage in genuine consultation with the individuals before forging ahead with eviction plans in order to develop long-term housing solutions that meet the established criteria for affordability, access to adequate space, and access to sanitation and essential services.

In their responses to the NGOs expressing concerns over the situation of Roma from Přednádraží, both the central government authorities and the mayor of Ostrava declared that it is not within their mandate to resolve the problems.

On 26 April this year, an activist from Life Together NGO based in Ostrava said that the affected families who relocated to dormitories for fear to remain homeless are hoping for a return to Přednádraží.

Previous documents issued by Amnesty International on the case:

^ *Czech Republic: The President's visit to Ostrava should send a strong signal against discrimination of Roma*, 15 March 2013 (public statement)

<http://www.amnesty.org/en/library/info/EUR71/002/2013/en>

^ *Czech Republic: Ostrava municipality must act now to provide sustainable housing solution to the Roma from Přednádraží Street, Ostrava*, 21 September 2013 (public statement)

<http://www.amnesty.org/en/library/info/EUR71/005/2012/en>

^ *Roma families at risk of forced eviction*, 06 August 2012 (Urgent Action) -

<http://www.amnesty.org/en/library/info/EUR71/004/2012/en>

^ *Roma families face forced eviction while city earmarks EU funds for social inclusion*, 10 August 2013 (press release)

<http://www.amnesty.eu/en/press-releases/all-0585/>

^ *Czech Republic: Roma families at imminent risk of forced eviction*, 3 August 2013 (news story)

<http://www.amnesty.org/en/news/czech-republic-roma-families-imminent-risk-forced-eviction-2012-08-03>

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