

URGENT ACTION

SCORES OF FAMILIES RISK HOMELESSNESS IN LIBYA

Scores of families of Tabu origin in Kufra municipality, south-east Libya, are reported to have been forcibly evicted and have had their houses demolished by law enforcement officials. Many are now in urgent need of shelter. Further forced evictions and demolitions are expected to follow.

The evictions and demolitions have taken place over the last five months, in areas where large numbers of families of Tabu origin, are believed to live. They are carried out by armed law enforcement officials, assisted by people driving bulldozers and fire engines. According to reports received by Amnesty International, some families have been given minutes to leave their houses, while others found out that their homes would be destroyed when their house was marked with a cross a day before the demolition. Those who resisted have reportedly been beaten with sticks by security agents or had firefighters point high-pressure hoses at them. In some cases, law enforcement officials are said to have destroyed furniture inside the houses.

Families have told Amnesty International that those evicted were neither consulted about the evictions, nor given alternative housing. According to the information available to Amnesty International, Tabu community leaders were contacted by local officials in June 2009, who told them of plans for demolitions without providing details of when they would take place and how many dwellings they would affect. The officials stated that this would make way for a road. When the leaders protested, officials reportedly told them that they were simply implementing instructions "from above". Several families whose houses were demolished have not been able to find alternative accommodation, and were forced to live in the ruins of their houses without any shelter. According to community members, they were chased away by law enforcement officials, before finding shelter in farms or other public places. Amnesty International fears that there will be more evictions, based on a copy of a letter dated 3 November 2009 from the Head of the Office of the Implementation of Housing Projects and Facilities in Kufra received by the organization. The letter was sent to Kufra's Director of Public Security, and ordered the demolition of 730 "unsanitary houses" in three neighbourhoods where residents are mainly from Tabu origin, without offering alternative housing or emergency accommodation.

PLEASE WRITE IMMEDIATELY in Arabic, English or your own language:

- Urging the Head of the Office of the Implementation of Housing Projects and Facilities in Kufra to immediately stop the forced evictions and the demolitions of the houses;
- Urging the Libyan authorities to immediately provide adequate alternative housing and the necessary relief to those who had their houses demolished;
- Urging the Libyan authorities to initiate as a matter of priority a process of genuine consultation with residents of all designated "unsanitary houses" in the affected areas in Kufra and explore all feasible alternatives to evictions;
- Urging the Libyan authorities to ensure that the process is not discriminatory in any way.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS BEFORE 12 MAY 2010 TO:

Secretary of the Administrative Committee
of the Office of the Implementation of
Housing Projects and Facilities

Dr Abu A'gila El-Mabrouk

Fax: +218 213 696447/ 696477

Email via www.hib.org.ly/ar>ContactUs.aspx

**(In first box put name, in second box put
email address and paste your appeal into
the large box)**

Salutation: Dear Sir

Secretary of the General People's
Committee

Dr Al-Baghdadi Ali Al-Mahmoudi

Email via

<http://www.gpc.gov.ly/html/contact.php>

**(In first box put name, in second box put
email address, in third box put the subject
of your message, and paste your appeal
into the large box)**

Salutation: Your Excellency

Gaddafi Development Foundation

Executive Director

Youssef M. Sawani

Salutation: Dear Sir

Fax: +218 214778301

Email: director@gdf.org.ly

Salutation: Dear Sir

Also send copies to diplomatic representatives accredited to your country. Please check with your section office if sending appeals after the above date.

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ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

House demolitions and forced evictions in Kufra are believed to have started in early November 2009, with the burning of several huts and houses. Amnesty International received reports that dozens of people were arrested in November when they attempted to prevent the demolitions. They were held by the Internal Security Agency, compelled to sign a document that they will not oppose the demolitions and subsequently released. In fear of retaliation, other families of Tabu origin who have faced evictions or who anticipate evictions have been less vocal in opposing evictions.

These demolitions and house evictions came against the backdrop of discriminatory policies and practices against the Tabu community in Kufra and surrounding areas. In recent years, Amnesty International has received reports of discrimination against members of Tabu tribes at the hands of the Libyan authorities. These have included being refused the renewal or extension of their identification documents, driving licences and passports. In other instance, Tabu parents were not able to register the birth of their children and were denied birth certificates.

In November 2009, instructions were reportedly given by Libyan security officials to confiscate all identification documents of Tabus aged under 18, and to ban them from travelling. The deprivation of identification and travel documents has impacted on their enjoyment of several rights, including the right to education; freedom of movement within and outside the country; the right to work; and access to essential services particularly medical services.

According to members of the Tabu community in Kufra, hundreds of students of Tabu origin have been denied access to public schools in Kufra and its surrounding areas since 2008. In the course of 2008 and 2009, several students of Tabu origin were barred from schools without being provided with an official reason.

Discriminatory policies and practices against Kufra's Tabu community were acknowledged by Colonel Belgacem Lab'aj, a member of the security forces in Kufra. On 14 December 2009, in an interview with *Cerene* (Quryna in Arabic), a Libyan newspaper owned by a company closely affiliated with Saif al-Islam al-Gaddafi, son of the Libyan leader, he said: "... We should admit that our policies inside the region [Kufra] pushed the Tabu to take hostile positions, including to deprive them from education... and not receiving pregnant women to be treated at the hospital because they do not present proof (of nationality)..." .

There are no official statistics available on the number of members of the Tabu community in Libya. Most are believed to reside in Kufra and the surrounding regions. Members of the Tabu tribes can also be found in Chad and Sudan.

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