URGENT ACTION

ROMA FAMILIES FACE FORCED EVICTION IN SERBIA

Five Roma families facing eviction will be left homeless on 11 August, unless the Belgrade City authorities provide them with alternative housing.

The five Roma families live in privately owned buildings in Skadarska Street in Belgrade, Serbia, and are at risk of being forcibly evicted. Some 20 people including 10 children will be affected. The eviction is being carried out on the basis of a decision made by a Belgrade court on 29 June, which states that the residents have to vacate the property and remove all their possessions.

According to Praxis, a Serbian NGO, as soon as they heard about the eviction, the residents from the community contacted Praxis, who on 20 July asked the Belgrade City Secretariat for Social Protection to provide the families with adequate alternative housing. However, the City authorities have as yet failed to make an official response.

On 27 July, the affected families, together with activists from several Belgrade NGOs, peacefully prevented an officer of the court, accompanied by police officers, from carrying out the forced eviction. They managed to negotiate with the court official for the eviction to be postponed until 11 August, during which time the NGOs stated they would take all possible measures to influence the relevant authorities, to ensure that the families were provided with adequate alternative housing.

In addition to the prospect of forced eviction, some families fear that the social workers may take their children into care. Another family who do not originate from Belgrade overheard remarks that they would be forcibly sent to southern Serbia.

Please write immediately in English or your own language to the authorities in Serbia, urging them to:
- Stop the forced eviction of the five Roma families in Skadarska Street;
- Provide adequate alternative housing for the families affected;
- Ensure that any further evictions are carried out only as a last resort and in full compliance with international human rights standards, with genuine consultation with the affected community to identify all feasible alternatives to evictions and resettlement options.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS BEFORE 11 AUGUST 2011 TO:

Minister of Labour and Social Policy
Rasim Ljajić
Nemanjina 22-24
11 000
Belgrade
Serbia
Email: ministar@minrzs.gov.rs
Salutation: Dear Minister,

Secretary for Social Protection
Vladan Djukic
27 Marta 43-45
11 000
Belgrade
Serbia
Fax: +381 11 330 9251
Salutation: Dear Secretary,

And copies to:
Deputy Prime Minister
Bozidar Djelic
Nemanjina 11
11 000
Belgrade
Serbia
Fax: +381 11 3617597
Email: kabinet.potpredsednika@gov.rs

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

Amnesty International is extremely concerned at the rising number of forced evictions of Roma communities living in informal settlements in Belgrade. Serbia is a state party to international and regional human rights treaties which prohibit forced evictions, including the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights. In particular the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights in their General Comment 7 have stated that "evictions should not result in individuals being rendered homeless or vulnerable to the violation of other human rights". The Serbian government has failed to prevent forced evictions of Roma by the City of Belgrade, who not only lose their homes, but often their livelihoods and their only possessions.

The Serbian government has failed to comply with its obligations under these treaties including by adopting a law prohibiting forced evictions, which would ensure that the processes and safeguards, set out in relevant international human rights standards, are in place before any evictions are carried out.

Name: Five families
Gender m/f: Both

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