

# URGENT ACTION

## FAMILIES UNDER NEW THREAT OF FORCED EVICTION

**Twenty-seven Roma families, including some displaced from Kosovo, are facing imminent forced eviction from their homes in the Serbian capital, Belgrade. The government, responsible for the eviction, has not provided them with adequate alternative accommodation.**

On 16 November, the City of Belgrade Inspectorate served the 27 Roma families living in Block 61 in New Belgrade with eviction notices, giving them 24 hours to demolish their homes and leave the settlement. The City have said that they will wait for 15 days from the day of the notice to allow appeals, but under Serbian law they can go ahead with the eviction at any time.

The City of Belgrade had told the Roma residents on 1 November that their settlement was going to be evicted at the request of a state-owned company, the Building Directorate of Serbia, which was planning to build commercial housing on the site. The Roma settlement is on land owned by the government, which gave the go-ahead for the building project less than three months ago. This is the first eviction to be carried out on behalf of the government rather than the City. The eviction is likely to be carried out soon, as the company wants to start building work before the end of the year. If it goes ahead as planned, the eviction will be carried out in December, when temperatures often fall below freezing.

Twenty of the families fled Kosovo after the war in 1999, and are therefore internally displaced persons (IDPs): many of their children were born in Serbia. The families have not been consulted about the eviction or offered adequate alternative accommodation, as required by international standards. If the eviction goes ahead as planned Belgrade families are likely to be sent to a container settlement while IDPs will be encouraged to return to Kosovo, moved to abandoned houses in villages north of Belgrade or sent to a collective centre for refugees that does not provide adequate housing.

**Please write immediately in English or your own language, urging the authorities to:**

- Stop the forced eviction of Roma families living in Belgrade's Block 61, as it would violate Serbia's responsibilities under international law;
- Provide adequate alternative housing for these families,
- Provide assistance and protection to internally displaced persons living in informal settlements in Serbia, as required by the UN Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement.

**PLEASE SEND APPEALS BEFORE 15 DECEMBER 2011 TO:**

Mayor of City Municipality of New Belgrade

Nenad Milenković  
Bulevar Mihaila Pupina 167  
11000  
Belgrade, Serbia  
Fax: +381 11 3112576  
Salutation: Dear Mayor

Deputy Prime Minister

Bozidar Djelic  
Nemanjina 11  
11 000  
Belgrade, Serbia  
Fax: +381 11 3617597  
Email: kabinet.potpredsednika@gov.rs  
Salutation: Dear Sir

Minister for Human and Minority Rights,

Milan Markovic  
Bircaninova 6  
11 000  
Belgrade, Serbia  
Email: kabinet@mduls.gov.rs  
Fax: +381 11 2685396  
Salutation: Dear Minister

Also send copies to diplomatic representatives accredited to your country.

Please check with your section office if sending appeals after the above date. This is the second update of UA 323/11. Further information:

<http://www.amnesty.org/en/library/info/EUR70/026/2011/en>

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## ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Forced evictions of Roma communities living in informal settlements in Belgrade are taking place at an increasingly rapid pace. 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 lose not only their homes, but often their livelihoods and their only possessions.

Internally displaced persons from Kosovo are particularly vulnerable. In 2009, the UN's Representative of the Secretary-General on the human rights of internally displaced persons, Walter Kälin, reported that “almost a third of all Roma IDPs (32%, compared to 6.9% for non-Roma IDPs) surveyed [are] reported to live in an object not intended for housing”. He also expressed concern about the increasing number of forced evictions of Roma in Belgrade, including the eviction of IDPs from Kosovo, from informal settlements, to clear space for public infrastructure projects. He recommended” the Government, [to] develop, in close consultation with civil society, international organizations and the Serbian Ombudsperson, clear and uniform guidelines that direct municipal and other concerned authorities on how to handle such cases in line with international standards.”

The Serbian Ombudsperson held meetings on 15 and 18 November with representatives of the city of Belgrade, NGOs, Ministry of Human Rights and Ministry Urban Planning officials and UNHCR. One of the outcomes of this meeting is that a group was formed to deal with this eviction and to hold a consultation with the community. The group is formed of National Roma Council representatives, Decade of Roma representatives, two representatives from Block 61 (an IDPs' representative and a local Roma representative), NGO and public agencies.

While the government has recognized Roma from Kosovo as IDPs, the government has failed to provide them with basic rights or other forms of protection set out in the UN Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement, including an adequate standard of living, which includes: essential food and drinking water; basic shelter and housing; essential medical services and sanitation. Roma IDPS living in informal settlements have not been granted these rights. This is set to be the third forced eviction to take place in Belgrade within a month. Activists who have tried to prevent evictions have been arrested. The Serbian government has failed to comply with its obligations under these treaties, which include adopting a law prohibiting forced evictions, which would ensure that the processes and safeguards set out in the UN Guidelines and Principles on Development Based Evictions and Resettlement, are in place before any evictions are carried out. Amnesty International representatives met with the Serbian government in October and delivered a petition with over 20,000 signatures asking for a law to prohibit forced evictions. The deputy prime minister of Serbia Božidar Đelić has not yet agreed that such a law is necessary.

Name:

Gender m/f: Both

Further information on UA: 323/11 Index: EUR 70/028/2011 Issue Date: 21 November 2011

