

# AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL

## PUBLIC STATEMENT

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### **Rome authorities should stop forced evictions targeting Roma**

Amnesty International is concerned about recent forced evictions targeting Romani communities in Rome. The organization has received reports of two forced evictions involving Romani families in the past week.

In the morning of 29 January, a group of about 60 women, men and children, Romanian nationals of Romani ethnicity, were forcibly evicted from the Somaini park, where they had been living for several months in shacks built both inside and outside abandoned ruins within a private property.

The state police, which executed the eviction, told Amnesty International that it was necessary for security reasons linked to the safety of structures within the property. However, they did not consult the affected individuals or provide written notice about the eviction. Instead, the police issued each of them with written notices indicating the initiation of criminal investigations against all those occupying the area for criminal invasion of property.

According to local NGO representatives present during the eviction, with whom Amnesty International has spoken, representatives of the municipality only offered alternative shelter to women with small children, who reportedly turned down the offer, because they did not want to be separated from the rest of their families. Local NGOs also report that children living in the camp have been regularly attending local schools, and that the few who did not were waiting to be admitted to local schools. These children's schooling is likely to be heavily affected by the forced eviction.

On 27 January, the Polizia Ferroviaria, a branch of the state police responsible for law and order on the railway network, evicted about 50 Romani women, men and children who had been occupying a property in via Castelguidone, in Rome, for several months.

This eviction too was ordered by the state police and once again the affected people did not receive written notice of the eviction. Only some women with small children were initially offered temporary shelter, which was refused. A representative of the municipality reported to Amnesty International that the municipality had been warned of the upcoming eviction only at the last moment, which was why they were not prepared to offer shelter to all those affected. However, a police official, also interviewed by Amnesty International, said that the municipality had been informed of the eviction several days prior to the date of the eviction. Amnesty International has not established whether such information was in fact transmitted and in which form. After the affected Roma spent several hours demonstrating in front of the Office of the Municipal Councillor for Social Affairs, they were offered alternative accommodation which they accepted.

Amnesty International urges the relevant authorities to offer alternative shelter, in a similar fashion, to all the people evicted from the Somaini park as a matter of urgency.

Furthermore, Amnesty International calls on the authorities to ensure that all people affected by these evictions have access to long term adequate accommodation, in case they are not able to provide for themselves, and that such accommodation is identified in full, genuine consultation with them.

After several months when reports of forced evictions had substantially decreased, these two cases seem to indicate a change of approach, which is of concern to Amnesty International. The organization recognizes that there are instances when an eviction is necessary, for safety or other reasons. However, it wishes to remind all relevant authorities in Rome that whenever an eviction is necessary, this should be implemented in line with relevant international human rights law and standards. These foresee, inter alia, that evictions should be carried out only as a last resort and after a genuine consultation with affected communities. All those affected by evictions must be provided with adequate notice and sufficient time and opportunities to challenge the eviction. Furthermore, evictions should never be carried out under adverse weather conditions, such as those reported from Rome during this week, or result in affected people being made homeless. All those who cannot provide for themselves must be provided with adequate alternative housing. Evictions conducted without respecting such guarantees are to be considered forced evictions, which constitute grave human rights violations.<sup>1</sup>

Amnesty International calls on Rome authorities to refrain from any further forced evictions; ensure that those affected by evictions have access to reparation and an effective remedy; and guarantee that any future evictions of individuals living in camps are carried out only as a last resort, and in full compliance with the guarantees required under regional and international human rights law and standards, including adequate notice, genuine consultation and the provision of adequate alternative housing to all those who cannot provide for themselves, without separating families.

Amnesty International recognizes that different authorities have the responsibility to ensure that the guarantees above are put in place, and that a proper coordination amongst them is essential in order to avoid human rights violations. The organization calls on the Prefect and Mayor of Rome to guarantee that adequate procedures are in place to ensure that evictions are implemented only when strictly necessary and always in a way that respects regional and international human rights law and standards.

Forced evictions are a gross human right violation. These latest forced evictions are yet another reminder to the Italian government of the urgency to enact and enforce a clear prohibition on forced evictions, including through the adoption of guidelines to relevant state officials and local authorities clearly stating the safeguards to be put in place.

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<sup>1</sup> UN Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, General Comment No. 7: The right to adequate housing (art. 11.1 of the Covenant): forced evictions. See also: Amnesty International, Know your obligations: A guide to preventing forced evictions (Index Number: ACT 35/009/2012, November 2012).