

URGENT ACTION

FORCED EVICTION FOR ROMA FAMILIES

Eight Roma families, some 50 people, have been violently evicted from the former military barracks where they had recently been resettled, on the outskirts of the capital, Tirana. Police brought four families back to the barracks, but they have since fled. The other four families refused to return.

According to local sources, in the evening of 23 May, local people, who had earlier protested against the Roma families' being settled at the barracks, beat members of the Roma group and threatened them with guns, forcing them to flee. Although the police had previously guarded the Roma from attack at this site, it seems they were not present or were ineffective. The Roma families fled and began to build their shacks elsewhere.

It seems that the Ombudsperson called on the police to ensure their safe return. Reluctantly, four families returned to the barracks under police guard. However, because of the hostility of the local people, their freedom of movement was severely restricted. A local NGO has told Amnesty International that the four Roma families have once again left the barracks buildings assigned to them, because the buildings are uninhabitable.

Amnesty International believes the barracks, at Sharre, on the outskirts of the capital, Tirana, did not meet international standards for adequate housing: eight families were required to live in seven rooms, with no electricity or running water; the building lacked basic privacy (including doors to bathrooms) and some windows were broken.

Please write immediately in English, Italian or your own language:

- Say that Amnesty International has repeatedly stated that the living conditions in the former military barracks to which the families have been moved do not meet international standards for adequate housing;
- Point out that these conditions were made even worse by the attacks and armed threats to the families on 23 May by local people, which have made their situation untenable;
- Urge the authorities to take action at once to find adequate alternative temporary accommodation, where the Roma families will not be at risk, and also to find permanent accommodation, which meets international standards;
- Urge them to assist all the Roma families forced to leave a site near Tirana railway station in February 2011 to build new lives, by providing them with access to employment, education and medical services;

PLEASE SEND APPEALS BEFORE 11 JULY 2012 TO:

Minister of Internal Affairs

Z. Bujar Nishani
Ministër i Punëve të Brendshme
Sheshi Skënderbej, Nr 3
Tirana, Albania
Email: bnishani@moi.gov.al
ministria.brendshme@moi.gov.al

Salutation: Dear Minister

Minister of Labour & Social Affairs

Z. Spiro Ksera
Ministër i Punës, Cështjeve
Sociale dhe Shanseve të Barabarta
Rruga e Kavajës
Tirana, Albania
Email: spiroksera@yahoo.gr

Salutation: Dear Minister

And copies to:

The People's Advocate
Z. Igli Totozani
Institucioni i Avokatit të Popullit
Blv. "Zhan D'Ark", Nr. 2,
Tirana, Albania
Email: itotozani@avokatipopullit.gov.al

Salutation: Dear Mr Totozani

Also send copies to diplomatic representatives accredited to your country. Please insert local diplomatic addresses below:

Name Address 1 Address 2 Address 3 Fax Fax number Email Email address Salutation Salutation

Please check with your section office if sending appeals after the above date. This is the third update of UA 32/12. Further information:

<http://amnesty.org/en/library/info/EUR11/006/2012/en>

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ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

The eight Roma families are among some 40 Roma families who in February 2011 left an informal settlement near the railway station in Albania's capital, Tirana, where they were living, after a series of attacks by men from outside the settlement. The authorities at first offered them temporary accommodation in tents at Babrru, on the outskirts of Tirana, until they were resettled. (The other families refused this offer mainly on health and safety grounds, and have still not been offered alternative accommodation). In mid-February 2012 these eight families, threatened with eviction, were moved to temporary accommodation, first at the Office of the Ombudsperson and later on the premises of the Albanian Romani Association, before being taken, under police escort, to buildings at a former military barracks which the authorities had offered them as permanent accommodation.

As a state party to the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR), the government of Albania is legally obliged to respect, protect, and progressively fulfil the right to adequate housing, guaranteed in Article 11(1) of the ICESCR.

Further, Albania has undertaken to fulfil the objectives of the "Decade of Roma Inclusion 2005-2015", an initiative of 12 European countries to improve the socio-economic status of Roma communities, and has adopted an (Albanian) National Strategy "For the improvement of the living conditions of the Roma minority".

Name: Eight Romani families (50 people)

Gender m/f: Both

Further information on UA: 32/12 Index: EUR 11/007/2012 Issue Date: 30 May 2012