

AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL PUBLIC STATEMENT

Index: EUR 39/004/2012
19 April 2012

Hundreds of Roma in Baia Mare, Romania are at imminent risk of forced eviction by local authorities

More than one hundred Roma people from the informal settlement of Pirita in the town of Baia Mare are facing an imminent threat of forced eviction by the local authorities. No alternative accommodation has been offered to date and many are at risk of being left homeless. Moreover, those currently living in Pirita who do not have identity documents registered in Baia Mare have also been threatened with expulsion from the city.

On 10 April in an interview for an online newspaper *eMaramures*, an advisor to the mayor of Baia Mare announced the local authorities' plan to demolish the houses in the informal settlement of Pirita. He stated that the inhabitants of the settlement received eviction notices, and that the mayor had issued 15 demolition orders. He claimed that two houses had already been demolished by the inhabitants themselves who had since left the area. The remaining 13 buildings were to be demolished on the expiry of the 30-day time limit required by the law, on 3 May.

In the first stage of the eviction, the municipality will reportedly target people who do not have identity documents registered in Baia Mare. Their houses will be demolished and they will be sent to the municipalities in which they are registered. The remaining houses are reportedly planned to be demolished by 31 May. Reportedly, the Roma who will be evicted from Pirita informal settlement will not be provided with alternative housing. The municipality announced that in order to ensure that the area will not be repopulated, police forces will supervise the area in order to prevent people from returning to Pirita.

Amnesty International is extremely concerned that the plans of the municipality of Baia Mare appear to be entirely missing human rights safeguards. The municipality has planned the eviction without ensuring that the affected individuals will be able to provide themselves with new housing. Amnesty International reminds the municipality of Baia Mare that under international human rights law applicable in Romania, it has an obligation to ensure that nobody is rendered homeless as a result of their eviction. The local authorities are required to ensure that evictions are carried out only as a last resort. Prior to an eviction, the municipality should consult all the affected individuals, provide them with adequate notice and ensure access to legal aid should they wish to challenge the eviction decision.

These safeguards are enshrined in the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, as well as the European Convention on Human Rights and a number of other human rights standards that the government of Romania has signed up to.

Amnesty International is further concerned that, if carried out, the decision of the local authorities to target individuals lacking identity papers registered in Baia Mare would amount to a punitive measure that deliberately and discriminately targets people lacking residency or other status. Amnesty International is concerned that this would violate their right to freedom of movement and to choose their place of residence. As a state party to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, Romania is under an obligation to ensure to everyone lawfully residing within its territory the right to move freely and to choose his or her place of residence.

Amnesty International notes with concern that this is yet another attempt by the local authorities in Baia Mare to forcibly evict Roma people living in informal settlements. On two previous occasions, in July 2010 and August 2011, the municipality announced plans to evict hundreds of Roma and other socially disadvantaged people from the informal settlements of Craica, Ferneziu, Horea and Valea Borcutului, but did not go ahead with them following domestic and international criticism.

END/