

URGENT ACTION

ROMANI FAMILIES DENIED THE RIGHT TO WATER

Five Romani families, including children who were forcibly evicted from Belgrade to the Nis, a city in southern Serbia, are being denied water, sanitation and electricity.

Five Romani families, 18 people including children and a pregnant woman, who later gave birth, were resettled to an abandoned warehouse in Daniciceva Street in Nis without access to water, sanitation or electricity. They have been without access to water for more 10 weeks since being forcibly evicted from Belgrade on 26 April. It is currently summer in Serbia and day-time temperatures are regularly over 35 degrees Celsius.

There is no running water in the warehouse though the necessary infrastructure for it exists. The city authorities stated on 20 June that the water can be switched on relatively easily, and that it would be switched on by the end of that week. The water has still not been switched on, violating the families' rights to adequate housing, water and sanitation. The families have to fetch water in plastic containers from the nearest public waterpoint, located in a market, some 115 metres from the warehouse. This source of water is not continuous as the market is only open between 7 am and 3 pm; even when the market is open, the Roma are frequently denied access to the waterpoint by a market official. The only alternative source is a water point in the city centre more than a 30 minute walk away.

The right to water requires that water be in, or in the immediate vicinity of where people live, according to the World Health Organization (WHO), where a water source is between 100 – 1000 metres away from a household, or where it takes between 5-30 minutes (including time spent waiting in a queue) to collect water, people are unlikely to be able to collect more than 20 litres of water per person and therefore face a risk to their health. In addition, the warehouse does not have adequate toilets as the ones that exist are unsanitary due to the lack of water.

Please write immediately in English or your own language:

- Urging the Nis city authorities to immediately ensure that the Romani families located in the warehouse in Daniciceva Street are guaranteed free access to sufficient and safe water.
- Urging them to take immediate measures to improve the temporary living conditions for the Romani families in Daniciceva Street including by providing food as well as sanitation, electricity and other services.
- Urging them to provide adequate alternative housing to all Romani families forcibly relocated to Nis

PLEASE SEND APPEALS BEFORE 20 AUGUST 2012 TO:

Mayor

City of Nis Mayor
Milos Simonovic
Ulica 7 Juli broj 2
18 000 Nis
Serbia
Fax: +381 18 504545
Email: mayor@ni.rs
Salutation: Dear Mayor

City Councillor

Dusica Davidovic
Ulica 7 Juli broj 2
18 000 Nis
Serbia
Fax: +381 18 504545
Email: Dusica.Davidovic@gu.ni.rs
Salutation: Dear City Councillor

And copies to:

The Delegation of the European Union to the Republic of Serbia
Martin Kern
Avenija 19a Building
Vladimira Popovica 40/V
11070 New Belgrade
Serbia
Fax: +381 11 3083201
Email: delegation-serbia@eeas.europa.eu

Also send copies to diplomatic representatives accredited to your country. 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.

**AMNESTY
INTERNATIONAL**



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ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

On 26 April 2012 the Belgrade City authorities forcibly evicted some 240 families, almost 1000 people from an informal Romani settlement in Belvil, Belgrade (See UA: 85/12 <http://www.amnesty.org/en/library/info/EUR70/007/2012/en>). Amnesty International has monitored the situation in this settlement since February 2010 and a monitoring delegation was present in advance, during and after the eviction itself. A delegation also visited Serbia, including Nis, in June.

The City of Belgrade offered alternative accommodation only to those families who had legal residence in the City while the other families were excluded from resettlement options and returned to southern Serbia. According to Amnesty International research, the municipalities in southern Serbia were informed about the eviction only five days before it happened and had insufficient time to prepare to receive the returning families.

These five families were some of the 240 families who were forcibly evicted on 26 April 2012 by the Belgrade City authorities from an informal settlement at Belvil in Belgrade. They are amongst more than 100 families who were forcibly returned to other towns and cities in Serbia. The Nis authorities placed the families in an abandoned warehouse owned by the city which does not fulfil minimum standards for adequate alternative housing as required by international human rights law.

According to the information provided to Amnesty International by the City authorities, the water in the warehouse was switched off some time ago because the warehouse was not in use, and can be switched on without difficulty. According to the City for the electricity to be switched on, the electricity needs to be completely rewired; they claim they not have the funds to do that at this moment. The families were provided with petroleum lamps instead.

The UN Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights at its twenty-ninth session in 2002 adopted the General Comment No. 15 on the right to water which, among else, states that “the human right to water entitles everyone to sufficient, safe, acceptable, physically accessible and affordable water for personal and domestic uses”. Under the right to sanitation the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights has also said that states must ensure that everyone, without discrimination, has physical and affordable access to sanitation, “in all spheres of life, which is safe, hygienic, secure, socially and culturally acceptable, provides privacy and ensures dignity.”

In accordance with International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights and other international standards, the authorities in Serbia have the obligation to secure access to sufficient amounts of water for these families.

The European Union Delegation to Serbia is heading up a working group relating to the needs assessment of the people who were forcibly evicted and therefore they are copied in as a target.

Name: Five families

Gender m/f: both

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