

URGENT ACTION

EVICITION OF ROMA HALTED

Following protests by human rights organizations and foreign embassies the planned forced eviction of Roma from Baia Mare, Romania on 5 September appears to have been put on hold.

On 23 August the Mayor of Baia Mare, in north-western Romania announced a plan to evict “hundreds” of Roma and other socially disadvantaged people from four areas of the city who did not have identity documents registered in Baia Mare and expel them back to their places of origin. Local media had reported that the eviction would start on 5 September. The statement sparked a reaction by Amnesty International and Bucharest-based NGO Romani CRISS and Zalau-based Şanse Egale, and has led to the mobilization of thousands of Amnesty International activists from across the world calling on the local authorities and the Romanian government to stop the forced eviction. There was also a strong reaction by the USA Embassy in Bucharest who released a statement on 31 August which said: "We echo the sentiments expressed by Amnesty International and others who declared that these evictions and demolitions should not be carried out. Ambassador Gitenstein hopes Mayor Chereches will work to find ways of improving the housing conditions for all in Baia Mare while respecting the rights of everyone." The Ambassador of the USA to Bucharest is reportedly visiting Baia Mare on 19 September to meet with the local authorities and visit the Roma communities in question.

On 13 September, the daily newspaper *Adevărul de seară* reported that a working committee from the Ministry of Public Administration and Interior and the Ministry of Labour, Family and Social Protection visited Baia Mare in order to discuss solutions towards resolving the situation of Romani communities and to offer their assistance to the city and Maramureş County authorities. According to the news report, the delegation visited the Romani communities in question in order to collect information to address concerns voiced by EU Justice and Home Affairs Commissioner, Viviane Reding, and Amnesty International. According to the report the Mayor presented a pilot project for the integration of Roma in Baia Mare and was reported as stating: “Three options for construction were identified (modular, brick or concrete). Approximately 400 homes will be built on three hectares of land. These will be equipped with all necessary utilities (power, water, gas) and the City Hall will provide transport for the Roma children to the kindergartens and schools in Baia Mare.”

In a response letter to Amnesty International activists, on 6 September, the mayor of Baia Mare said that while addressing the issue of informal settlements local authorities will respect national law and international human rights standards. However, the city’s authorities have yet to make a clear and explicit public commitment that no evictions will take place unless and until all the necessary safeguards are in place. However, to Amnesty International’s knowledge, two weeks after the scheduled date for the eviction no individuals or families have been evicted or homes demolished.

While welcoming the delay of the scheduled forced eviction, Amnesty International understands that local authorities still intend to remove the existing settlements from various areas of Baia Mare. Amnesty International will continue to monitor the situation in order to ensure that any eviction is carried out as a last resort and with due respect to international human rights standards.

No further action is required from the UA network. Thank you very much to all who took part in this action.

This is the first update of UA 252/11. Further information: <http://www.amnesty.org/en/library/info/EUR39/007/2011/en>

Name: Communities in Craica, Ferneziu, Horea, Pirita, Valea Borcutului
Gender m/f: Both

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