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## **Romania to forcibly evict hundreds of Roma**

Hundreds of Roma people could be made homeless as Romanian authorities reportedly prepare to demolish their houses in the north-western town of Baia Mare.

The Mayor of Baia Mare has told a local paper that plans to demolish the homes of hundreds of Roma living without identity papers in the town will go ahead by next week “at the latest”.

The Roma families say they have not been formally notified of the plans.

“Once again, Romanian authorities are openly discriminating against members of the Romani community,” said Jezerca Tigani, Amnesty International’s Deputy Director for Europe.

“Forcing out people who do not have a registered address in Baia Mare is a punitive measure that deliberately targets those with no official residence. The Mayor of Baia Mare must immediately put a stop to these plans.

“When the authorities evict Romani communities against their will, without proper consultation, notice or alternative housing, they are violating international treaties that the government of Romania has signed up to,” she added.

The planned evictions will affect Roma people living in the Craica, Pirita, Ferneziu and Horea areas of Baia Mare, who will be sent back to their places of origin across Romania and prevented from returning to the town.

“Evicting these people and forcing them out of the area violates their right to live in a place of their choice. The authorities in Baia Mare need to start a dialogue with these families as soon as possible and provide them with proper alternative housing,” Jezerca Tigani said.

This is the second attempt by local authorities in Baia Mare to evict Roma.

In July last year, the then Deputy Mayor announced a plan to demolish the homes of approximately 200 Romani families from an informal settlement in the Craica area. He backtracked after national and international criticism.

Although those currently threatened with eviction live in informal settlements in poor conditions, they say they want to remain in the area because they have nowhere else to go.

One man in Ferneziu told Amnesty International: “We do not have proper drainage systems and when it rains the water gets into the houses. But we don't want to move, we would like to improve our houses here.

Many are struggling. A Roma woman told Amnesty International: “After my house burned down, the

municipality official told me to build a shack here until I manage to rebuild my house again. But I have ten children and I don't have any money."

About two million Roma live in Romania, making up about 10 per cent of the total population.

According to government statistics, as many as 75 per cent live in poverty, compared to 24 per cent of Romanians in general.

Roma rarely own land and property and they are further disadvantaged by the lack of social housing in a country where 97 per cent of housing is private.

Although some Roma people live in permanent structures with legal tenancy, the authorities consider many longstanding Romani dwellings as "informal" or "illegal", and their inhabitants do not have any documentary proof of tenancy, which makes them more vulnerable to evictions.

Currently, Romanian law does not protect these people from forced evictions.

Amnesty International and other NGOs have documented a series of cases where Roma communities had been forcibly evicted and resettled in a way that created or entrenched segregation.