

URGENT ACTION

RESETTLEMENT OF ROMA FAMILIES POSTPONED AGAIN

The resettlement of twenty-four Roma households at the Belvil settlement in Belgrade has been postponed again. Roma families have not been meaningfully consulted and lack crucial information.

The resettlement date for twenty-four Roma households at the Belvil settlement in Belgrade that had been scheduled for the end of November, has been postponed again until mid-December. The families, who had been promised they would be provided with new homes before the autumn, have still not been meaningfully consulted and informed of the practical arrangements about moving, the apartments they will move into or any other arrangements. The other families living at the settlement were scheduled to be resettled in January to another site, but construction has not even started. Their resettlement has been postponed to March or April, so they will have to spend another winter in inadequate housing.

When Amnesty International's experts on Serbia visited the settlement on 4 November, the Roma families told them that they were still unsure about any practical arrangements put in place by the City of Belgrade in advance of the resettlement. Although a meeting to announce the latest delays was held on 30 October, the families have not been provided with a timeline and substantial, practical information about their resettlement.

Amnesty International also met with the Secretariat for Social Welfare, responsible for the implementation of the Resettlement Action Plan (RAP) concluded between the European Investment Bank (EIB) and the City of Belgrade. They were given reassurances of the efforts and goodwill of the Secretariat to resolve the issues around the resettlement, but practical measures still remain to be taken.

If human rights requirements, including genuine consultation and providing full information are not followed, the removal of the affected families for resettlement could result in a forced eviction.

Please write immediately in English or your own language:

- Urging the City of Belgrade to ensure the upcoming resettlement of Roma families living at Belvil is in accordance with international standards, including the UN Basic Principles and Guidelines on development-based evictions and displacement and those which derive from the Resettlement Action Plan with the EIB;
- Expressing concern that the affected families have not been informed about transitional arrangements and remain uncertain of their future as winter fast approaches;
- Calling on the City of Belgrade to ensure that sufficient personnel and resources are committed to conduct the resettlement according to international standards and that affected families and individuals are provided with security of tenure, access to schools, health centres and social welfare immediately after resettlement, and that urgent measures are taken to provide resettled Roma with meaningful employment opportunities.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS BEFORE 15 DECEMBER 2014 TO:

Mayor of the City of Belgrade

Dr Siniša Mali
Office of the Mayor
Dragoslava Jovanovića 2
11000 Belgrade, Serbia
Email: gradonacelnik@beograd.gov.rs

Salutation: Dear Mayor

And copies to:

Secretary for Social Welfare

Ms Jasmina Ivanović
Secretariat for Social Welfare
27. marta 43 – 45
11000 Belgrade, Serbia
Email: jasmina.ivanovic@beograd.gov.rs

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 first update of UA 270/14. Further information:

<http://www.amnesty.org/en/library/info/EUR70/017/2014/en>

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ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

The 50 Roma families remained at Belvil after the city authorities forcibly evicted more than 250 other families from another part of the site in April 2012. The families were to stay on the site until they could be resettled into permanent housing in advance of the building of access roads to a bridge over the nearby River Sava. The planned construction is co-funded by a loan from the European Investment Bank (EIB), which requires the city to resettle the families in line with international standards as a condition for the disbursement of the loan, as agreed in the Resettlement Action Plan (RAP). These standards are designed to ensure that the resettlement does not constitute a forced eviction or result in any further violation of the rights of the affected people.

The UN Basic Principles and Guidelines on development-based evictions and displacement sets out the responsibilities of the state authorities, including its agencies and local government bodies, including the City of Belgrade authorities. This includes the obligation to provide all necessary amenities, services and economic opportunities during the transition process and at the proposed site, and to meaningfully consult and assist the affected people, enabling them to actively participate in processes and decisions related to the resettlement. Additionally, EIB's own Environmental and Social Standards aim to ensure that all affected people are assisted to improve, or at least restore, their former livelihoods and living standards.

Amnesty International has recently talked to EIB about their responsibility to ensure that the City of Belgrade mitigates against potential human rights violations by ensuring the resettlement is carried out in accordance with the RAP, and with international human rights standards.

The rest of the Belvil families (26 households) were due to be resettled to a segregated site at Jabucki rit, on the outskirts of the city by January 2015. However, construction has not yet been started at this site, and they are not expected to be resettled until April next year.

Name: Belvil settlement inhabitants

Gender m/f: both

Further information on UA: 270/14 Index: EUR 70/018/2014 Issue Date: 6 November 2014