



PUBLIC STATEMENT

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Romania: Eforie municipality threatens to evict Roma families third time in two years

About 30 Roma, half of them children, are at imminent risk of being forcibly evicted once again by the local municipality of Eforie, in south-east Romania. Amnesty International, European Roma Rights Centre and Romani CRISS are calling on the Eforie municipality to refrain from carrying out any forced eviction. The local authorities should conduct genuine consultation with any affected communities, including the one living in Mihai Viteazu Street nr. 80 building, to identify all feasible alternatives to evictions and resettlement options.

The municipality of Eforie plans to evict 8 Roma families from the building located on Mihai Viteazu Street, nr.80 in Eforie. The families have been living there since October 2013 when altogether 101 people, including 55 children, were forcibly evicted from their long-standing homes in Agricola Street by the same municipality and rendered homeless. Some of the families were moved temporarily into a dilapidated school building nearby. Eight other families that did not want at that time to move into the dilapidated school building because of its dire conditions have been since squatting the abandoned boarding school at Mihai Viteazu Street nr.80, which is also inadequate.

On 14 April 2015, the 8 families received notifications from the municipality of Eforie informing them to pay 'all outstanding debts' and vacate the building. The notifications state that after the payment of debts, the housing commission would provide them with emergency housing within the limits of the municipality's available housing budget. The affected Roma have not been given any further information about the debts mentioned in the notifications, nor have they been guaranteed adequate alternative housing prior to eviction.

Amnesty International, European Roma Rights Centre and Romani CRISS are concerned that the municipality has not put in place key international human rights safeguards against forced evictions. For example, there has been no genuine consultation on alternatives to eviction. The authorities should also take into consideration the individual circumstances of each family as required by the case law of the European Court of Human Rights. A collective eviction, in the absence of such safeguards, would appear to be motivated by racial bias.

The organizations are further concerned as this latest threat is part of the pattern of forced evictions of Romani communities carried out in Eforie Sud municipality, and altogether across Romania, by local authorities. Several cases of threats of and forced evictions of communities living in Cluj-Napoca, Piatra Neamt, Baia Mare, Tulcea, Eforie Sud, Caracal have been documented since 2008.

The organizations have also raised their concerns repeatedly with the Romanian government over the long-standing failure of national authorities to outlaw forced evictions and ensure that all evictions are subject to appropriate safeguards.

Background

Romania is a party to a range of international and regional human rights treaties, which strictly require it to prohibit, refrain from and prevent forced evictions. These treaties include the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination. The UN Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights has emphasized in its General Comment 7 that evictions should only be carried out as a last resort, once all other feasible alternatives to eviction have been explored in genuine consultation with the communities affected. Even if an eviction is considered to be justified, it can only be carried out when the appropriate procedural protections are in place and if compensation for all losses and adequate alternative housing is provided to all people affected.

As recently as December 2014, the UN Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (CESCR) in its periodic review found Romania falling short of its international obligations, including in relation to forced evictions and protection of the right to adequate housing. CESCR's Concluding Observations recommended the adoption of all necessary measures to ensure access to adequate housing for disadvantaged and marginalized groups, including Roma. The Romanian authorities were urged to amend national legislation to provide a minimum degree of security of tenure for people living in informal settlements and adopt legislation to ensure that evictions are carried out in compliance with international human rights standards. In particular, forced evictions of Roma should be prevented "until they have been consulted, afforded due process guarantees and provided with alternative accommodation or compensation enabling them to acquire adequate accommodation".

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