

# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

## EXTERNAL EVALUATION OF AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL'S WORK ON TACKLING DISCRIMINATION AGAINST ROMA

November 2014 – Cambridge Policy Consultants, Independent Consultant

This document provides a summary of the external evaluation of Amnesty International's work on tackling discrimination against Roma. The external evaluation, carried out by Cambridge Policy Consultants, an independent consultant, was commissioned to identify key learning from the campaign for AI as well as to meet a requirement of NRK Norwegian Telethon that funded the campaign in 2013-14.

### BACKGROUND

Amnesty International has campaigned on discrimination against Roma in Europe since 2006. The objective has been to secure improvements in equal access to education, the right to housing (specifically in relation to forced evictions) and protection against racially motivated violence. Amnesty has campaigned for improvements in Roma rights at the member state, European Union (EU) and wider European levels, calling for regional standards that would allow Roma equal opportunities, equal treatment and respect for their human rights.

This evaluation focuses on the impact of the campaign during 2013-14, the period funded by the NRK Telethon but recognises that Amnesty has campaigned on the human rights of Roma people since 2006.

Key activities included a coordinated public facing campaign and advocacy at the European and country levels in partnership with civil society organisations and right holders, based on thorough research.

### METHODOLOGY

The research uses a process tracing methodology that requires a 'causal' story, starting from campaign activities through to a clearly defined intended outcome in policy or practice. These logic chains are then tested through interviews with a wide range of stakeholders involved in the process. The evaluation included interviews with 126 stakeholders and an online survey of 513 Amnesty members and supporters in Europe.

Amnesty's Roma campaign covered a range of activities across EU member states with some activities in countries outside of the EU. The evaluation focused on three case studies which were selected as exemplars of the wider campaign:

- Amnesty advocacy and campaign to encourage the European Commission (EC) to use its existing powers and become more proactive in tackling discrimination against Roma, specifically the use of an infringement procedure against specific EU member states for failure to implement the Race Equality Directive, EU's anti-discrimination legislation, by continuing human rights violations against Roma;

- Amnesty advocacy and campaign work to tackle forced evictions of Roma living in informal settlements in Romania through a change in national law regarding forced evictions, and policy and practice regarding forced evictions in the Municipalities of Cluj-Napoca and Baia Mare; and
- Amnesty advocacy and campaign work to address discrimination against Roma in Italy to prevent forced evictions and changing policy regarding discrimination in access to housing in Rome and Milan.

## KEY OUTCOMES

### EU Campaign

- The recent decision of the EU to launch an infringement procedure against the Czech Republic under the Race Equality Directive stands out as a significant achievement of the campaign. This was the first time the Commission had started an infringement procedure against a member state on the grounds of violating the Race Equality Directive alone. Amnesty led calls for this approach as a potential route to driving change from Brussels. The Commission also opened an EU pilot project on inclusion in Italy, the preliminary stage of the infringement procedure.
- There is evidence in all case studies that Amnesty's campaign objectives to encourage the EU to adopt a more active policing role – greater use of the stick alongside existing carrots – has been successful. This is not only apparent in the infringement procedure but also the push for adoption of national strategies and the broadening of the monitoring of these strategies. This was a more collective effort where Amnesty's campaign has been a prominent voice alongside other organisations.
- Amnesty's intervention pushed for the tightening of some European Institution's procedures and other entities when funding or providing loans to local actors or monitoring implementation of funded projects.
- The European-wide approach was seen by Amnesty sections as a particular strength of the campaign, enabling it to highlight Roma discrimination as a pan-European issue and mobilise Amnesty members and supporters.
- An indirect outcome of the campaign has been an increase in the capacity of civil society advocating Roma issues at the European level.

### Campaign on Romania

- The Romanian government has acknowledged forced evictions as a political problem and promised to respond by revising their housing regulation and developing guidelines for eviction procedures.
- There is evidence that local governments have improved their procedures for (forced) evictions and housing conditions. Changes in local level policy making have also occurred in municipalities that have not been directly targeted by Amnesty.
- A number of forced evictions were stopped or delayed and there is evidence of national policy-makers getting proactively involved in changing the policy – no forced evictions taking place in communities where Amnesty has worked more intensively.
- There have been a number of examples where Amnesty public campaign has had a direct effect: the Mayor of Baia Mare and the Prefect of the county in Romania did reply to the petition against forced evictions in August 2013. There has been a considerable reduction of forced evictions in Baia Mare and no forced evictions in Cluj recently. Amnesty's use of members and supporters writing letters to Mayors of municipalities where forced evictions were happening and mobilising activists within the Roma community at the local level, was seen as the major contributing factor to these changes.

- Amnesty has prompted Embassies present in Romania to put further pressure on the authorities to stop forced evictions.
- Local stakeholders reported an increase in awareness and involvement in human rights issues for their community.
- Roma activists that have worked with Amnesty have been advocating for/with other communities in situations of forced evictions.

#### Campaign on Italy

- Amnesty work has increased awareness of violations against Roma amongst national decision-makers in Italy. There is now a wider acceptance that discrimination needs to be addressed, including an improvement in the media and institutional language referring to Roma and the official substitution of the term “nomad” in official forms and title of departments.
- At a Senate’s Committee for Human Rights hearing, the councillor for housing of the Municipality of Rome declared that the Municipality had not been applying and did not intend to apply the housing circular in a discriminatory way.
- Stakeholders in Italy point to the advocacy on the Rome Municipality’s circular on Roma housing rights as being primarily Amnesty’s work: the Senate Committee for Human Rights hearing was “*only obtained thanks to AI*” (NGO 1). The Committee declared the circular discriminatory and the Municipality undertook not to adopt the Circular in their housing allocation criteria. In many respects, this encapsulates the rationale of the Amnesty Roma campaign to use the regional campaign to reinforce policy change in member states.
- The frequency of forced evictions in larger camps has slowed but similar actions are still occurring in smaller camps.

#### The public campaign

A key part of the Amnesty Roma campaign was to mobilise Amnesty members and supporters to raise their awareness of the issues facing Roma communities, through their involvement in petitions and rapid response actions. The intention was to demonstrate public concern and put pressure on EU institutions to act and raise general awareness and understanding of the discrimination Roma face in Europe:

- The public campaign has been raised in discussions at international level and was clearly recognised by public authorities who reported that it was helpful to see Roma communities directly involved in the campaign. We have no direct evidence on the additional impact this involvement had on securing policy change. However, some public officials, often those not directly subject to a popular mandate, have been made to feel uncomfortable by Amnesty’s campaign. We think, but cannot prove, that this has made a difference.
- Responses from Amnesty activists and supporters in Europe indicate that the regional campaign has raised awareness of on-going discrimination against Roma in Europe, in particular awareness of forced evictions. Strong take-up of Rapid Response for Forced Evictions actions further suggests that Amnesty activists became more engaged with the Roma agenda in Europe.
- Members and supporters were themselves spreading the message: discussing and sharing campaign materials with people that they already knew but less often with those they did not know.
- Prejudice remains widespread among the general public. A small number of Amnesty sections were concerned by the impact the Roma campaign would have on their members some of whom believed the cultural stereotypes and had expressed their dissatisfaction with AI. We have found no evidence in the survey of Amnesty members and supporters of this concern (but they are predominately those who played some active role in the campaign).

- Involvement of Roma in the European campaign was noted and appreciated by decision makers. Some stakeholders called for greater involvement of rights holders in the campaign. The team working on Romania adopted a more participatory approach to secure the ownership and commitment of the communities involved and stakeholders reported an increase in awareness and capacity of individuals in Roma communities in the north-western city of Cluj-Napoca in particular.
- Amnesty members and supporters felt that Amnesty should continue the Roma campaign with a strong level of support for continued action across different countries and age groups.

## AREAS FOR IMPROVEMENT

Other areas of the campaign have had a more limited impact:

- Raising awareness of the plight of Roma communities has not been able to eliminate discrimination. Widespread prejudice against Roma communities remains a significant issue. *“The politics of Roma remain toxic” [Civil Society representative 2]*. The current economic circumstances and on-going austerity have placed greater strain on community relations and the ability of public authorities to respond.
- This has led to some local partners to suggest that while policy decisions have been made, this has not yet led to substantive changes in practice on the ground. Some stakeholders identified a need for some strategies or tools (e.g. training to identify and pursue benchmarks) to assist and empower local civil society and communities to monitor the implementation of EU funded programmes and national strategies.
- Roma integration strategies are in their infancy but NGOs increasingly point the need to root housing issue in wider social and economic inclusion. Without work, Roma people will not have the income to afford social housing.
- A number of Amnesty sections felt that they needed positive responses to members, the media and others who might also raise stereotypes and ask for Amnesty’s view on such issues.
- A number of sections identified other issues related to Roma work in the national context, for example laws and policies on begging, particularly targeting Roma. *“It is very difficult not say anything about these issues while working on discrimination of Roma elsewhere in Europe.”* [Amnesty S/S 10]. It was suggested that an Amnesty policy related to different efforts to (de jure or de facto) criminalization of begging was needed.
- Many stakeholders clearly see that more work is required to secure the Roma campaign objectives and so the combined effect of wider changes in Amnesty priorities and consequent reduction of additional funding was not anticipated. This has perhaps had a more negative impact on local NGO and partners’ perceptions than might have been the case if these issues had been communicated to partners earlier.
- A number of communication issues have been identified by sections and Amnesty members:
  - Amnesty Secretariat should be better at updating on progress and keeping sections in the loop - this would have encouraged them (and their members) to become more active.
  - Sections were keen to share experiences with other sections and it may be an issue for future campaigns so that sections are aware of who is doing what and encouraged to network.
  - Urgent action work generated very good response but activists were eager to learn what happened as a result. One issue might be that Amnesty releases regular updates more promptly on what transpires afterwards.

- There was a need for improved communication and an aligned strategy and resources between the IS and the section in one of the countries of the case studies. Aligning IS campaign activities with local resources was a challenge and the difficulties in co-operation between teams was widely noted by local partners and external stakeholders.

## AMNESTY'S ADDED VALUE

In terms of what has enabled these outcomes to be achieved, there are a number of key areas of Amnesty's campaign identified by stakeholders:

- Amnesty's **profile and reputation** – as an organisation was viewed as very well linked at the European level, combining national knowledge and European-level overview, providing independent and reliable work.
- **Legal perspective** & knowledge – first to push for infringement for violation of Equalities Directive.
- By being **vocal and active** – Amnesty was singled out as a single organisation proactively engaging directly with the European decision-makers with a combination of tactics. Amnesty combines research-based public campaigning with advocacy to highlight decision-makers inaction. Making the case in such a public fashion adds pressure on officials to act.
- **Introducing the human rights dimension** to the debate, which had mainly focused on social and economic inclusion (rather than discrimination) of Roma.
- **Effective and approachable campaign team** – the International Secretariat are widely respected at all levels as being professional and effective in their contributions at international and national level.

Other impacts have been a more collective effort. Indeed, interviewees have praised Amnesty's ability to work in partnership with others and this has been a strength of the campaign. Amnesty have been named consistently as a key and respected voice on Roma issues, particularly in relation to forced evictions. However, they are more often seen as part of a group effort.

## PRIORITIES FOR THE FUTURE

The key message coming back from all stakeholders is that "*the job is not finished*". There were a number of common priorities identified in each case study:

- There is a concern at regional, national and local level that without continued pressure, any changes in policy and practice will grind to a halt in the face of widespread prejudice.
- For some, preventing discrimination is not the same as providing a sustainable solution. For example, as long as the camps remain the only approach on housing for Roma in Italy, segregation and social exclusion will worsen and so any inclusion strategy needs to begin with the rethinking of housing policies. This would require a broader set of campaign targets at EC and national level.
- Linked to this, would be the use of more positive examples of Roma people successfully integrating and providing an economic and cultural contribution to society; this would help shift public opinion alongside a continued public campaign. Any future campaign would need to build on the involvement of Roma communities themselves.
- The lack of capacity among local NGOs and communities was highlighted as an issue. It was suggested that Amnesty could have a continued role in building the capacity of local activists and NGOs to continue their own advocacy.

A key question is which of these priorities is Amnesty uniquely placed to support? At the European level Amnesty have consistently been identified the lead in advocating policy change and this is where most stakeholders would suggest is the most significant added value of Amnesty's Roma campaign. Amnesty have a significant insight into EU institutions and continued advocacy on Roma issues will be required to re-inforce recent policy changes. However, it will not be sufficient just to continue the campaign at the Brussels level alone, our findings would suggest that to support advocacy at this level it would be important to also have:

- A public campaign and awareness raising: we have no direct evidence that the public campaign led to EU institutions making decisions but it has certainly been widely noted by decision makers and has put additional pressure on them to respond.
- A continued link to Roma communities so that their own needs and priorities can be better represented and Amnesty can continue to produce high quality research to back their advocacy effort at this level.