



# JOINT PUBLIC STATEMENT

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## **Italy: Around 150 Roma in Naples again at risk of forced eviction and homelessness**

Amnesty International and the European Roma Rights Centre are urgently calling on the Naples local authorities to take all necessary measures and prevent the forced eviction of around 150 Romani adults and children and ensure they are not rendered homeless or vulnerable to other human rights violations. This would be the second forced eviction these families experience within the last three months and they would yet again be left in a situation of complete destitution, increasing their vulnerability and exacerbating their living conditions.

The news of the possible forced eviction comes as the College of European Commissioners wasted another opportunity to address, during their monthly meeting on 12 July, the systemic discrimination and segregation Roma face in relation to housing in Italy. This despite the fact that the European Commission has had a full caseload on this matter ready since early 2016. For years, international and national human rights organisations have repeatedly submitted extensive evidence and urged the European Commission to address the systemic human rights abuses Roma face in Italy and initiate infringement proceedings against the country for violation of EU law.

The approximately 150 Roma are now at risk of forced eviction, from a disused factory, privately owned, where they sought shelter in the last few weeks. The families are among the hundreds of Roma who were forcibly evicted on 7 April from the informal settlement of Gianturco and left without a roof over their head.

After weeks of sleeping rough, in parks and cars, or seeking temporary accommodation with friends and relatives, approximately a month ago, the families entered the premises of a former tobacco factory, not far from where once the informal settlement of Gianturco was. The factory has been in disuse for a few years and it provides only a basic shelter to the families, who constructed barracks inside the factory's halls. No services are available such as water, sanitation, electricity and families are forced to collect water from a public fountain or buy it for cooking, washing and other needs.

Amnesty International and the European Roma Rights Centre visited the area on 21 June and spoke to the affected families. One of the residents said: "*After Gianturco, we have been on the streets for days, we slept outside with our children, in cars sometimes. We had no place to go, we did not know where to go. Then we saw this courtyard and we entered... We slowly started building barracks, one for each family, so that everybody has a place to stay... The police came here... we explained to them that we have no place to go, that we were left homeless after Gianturco [forced eviction]... A few days ago an engineer came and placed the placards on the building ["danger of collapse"]. If they evict us from here, where do we go?*

*Again on the street?... If we cannot stay here, at least the municipality could give us a piece of land, and we could build something, rather than sleeping on the streets?"*

According to testimonies from the families, the police have repeatedly told the residents to leave the premises of the disused factory. During the Saturday 8 July visit, the police produced a document and claimed it was an eviction ordinance. This proved to be untrue when activists and residents went to the police station and requested a copy of the mentioned ordinance. On 11 July, police representatives returned to the factory and presented the families with another document in which it was stated that the private owner of the disused factory had to secure the area as well as refurbish the factory. At the same time the document stated that the people living inside the factory must be evicted by public authorities due to its unsafe conditions.

Amnesty International and the European Roma Rights Centre are urging the local authorities of Naples to intervene and ensure that the Romani families living in the factory are not forcibly evicted and left homeless once again. The organisations urge the mayor of Naples and the local councillor for social policies to take the following measures:

- Put in place all necessary measures to ensure that nobody is rendered homeless as a consequence of the forthcoming eviction by ensuring alternative solutions to those living in the disused factory;
- Since the disused factory is deemed unsafe for human habitation by public authorities, in the short term, provide all affected families with emergency accommodation that is in compliance with the right to adequate housing and guarantees access to basic services, security of tenure, and other required safeguards;
- Immediately initiate a consultation process with all people affected to identify long term sustainable housing solutions that do not perpetuate discrimination and segregation and are in compliance with international and national human rights standards.

The upcoming forced eviction of the families from the factory would fill up the ranks of a long line of forced evictions of Roma across Italy. There are hundreds of such forced evictions being carried out by authorities yearly, with many people left homeless or placed in ethnically segregated camps or reception centres, and facing at times discriminatory criteria for access to social housing. Such pervasive and systemic discrimination is prohibited under international and regional human rights standards including the EU Race Equality Directive. It must no longer remain unaddressed by the European Commission, responsible for upholding the principles of equality and fairness even when EU member states might try to erode them.

### **Background**

On 7 April, around [1,300 Romanian Roma living for years in the informal settlement of Gianturco, in the city of Naples, southern Italy, were forcibly evicted by local authorities](#), following a decree issued by the Prosecutor's Office for illegal occupation of the land. Around 130 of the Roma were transferred to a new segregated camp in Via del Riposo, while a few families were offered to move to the reception centre "Grazia Deledda". Dozens of families were not offered adequate alternative housing and were rendered homeless as a result of the forced eviction. Many have been sleeping rough for weeks on end or in cars, while many others have sought shelter with relatives in and around Naples, and improvised housing in other informal settlements. On 11 April, in a meeting sought by Romani families and activists, local authorities said they have no alternatives for the families left homeless.

Human rights organisations have repeatedly denounced the curtailment of Roma housing rights by Italian authorities. In September 2012, the European Commission opened "pilot" proceedings against Italy for its treatment of Roma under the EU Race Equality Directive. Despite evidence of abuses continuing to pile up, an infringement proceeding has not yet been launched against Italy. In April this year, the Financial Times newspaper [revealed](#) that the European Commission had repeatedly blocked action against Italy "to avoid a damaging public row."

Italy is a party to a number of international and regional human rights treaties that prohibit discrimination on the basis of race and ethnicity and require it to guarantee the right to adequate housing to all, including by strictly requiring it to prohibit, refrain from and prevent forced evictions: those evictions which are carried out without adequate notice and genuine consultation with those affected, without legal safeguards and without assurances of adequate alternative accommodation.

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