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Italy: Romani families unlawfully evicted from Tor de' Cenci camp, Rome.

Amnesty International is gravely concerned about the situation of about 250 Romani people who were being forcibly evicted from the camp of Tor de' Cenci in Rome, Italy, on 28 September 2012, in violation of international standards on evictions. The residents of Tor de' Cenci camp have never been genuinely consulted on the closure of the camp and are not being offered adequate alternative housing solutions. In particular, the organization is concerned that the only alternative housing offered by the authorities will result in further ethnic segregation for these families.

In addition, Amnesty International considers that their eviction risks exposing them to further human rights' violations, including to an effective remedy, adequate housing, family life, education and equality before the law.

The residents of Tor de' Cenci, mostly of Bosnian origin, who have been living in the camp for up to 16 years, are being forcibly evicted after their appeal to a local court against the ordinance of the mayor of Rome that their camp be closed for health and safety reasons was dismissed.

The eviction, ordered by the municipality of Rome, started in the morning of 28 September 2012. Local and national police were present in the camp, together with bulldozers to destroy the containers where families had lived for years.

On 26 September the administrative tribunal of the Lazio region ruled that the mayor of Rome's order dated 31 July 2012 that the Tor de' Cenci camp be closed for health and safety reasons could be implemented. The only alternative housing solution offered is the transfer to one of two authorized camps, both isolated mono-ethnic facilities outside Rome.

According to the eviction order, the Tor de' Cenci residents should have vacated the camp by 28 August 2012. However, some families appealed against the eviction to the administrative court. The court initially granted a suspension of the eviction and ordered the municipality to improve the living conditions in the camp while a final decision was taken. However, the court eventually decided on 26 September 2012 that the eviction could go ahead.

Although the residents would be entitled to appeal against the decision of the first instance court, the implementation of the eviction, which the authorities started immediately after the court decision, will result de facto in them being denied the possibility to challenge it further. Amnesty International is concerned that this treatment could be discriminatory compared with the procedures which would apply in case of eviction from private accommodation or other public housing.

Amnesty International has campaigned since 2010 against the closure of the camp of Tor de' Cenci documenting the failure of the municipality of Rome to meet international standards on lawful evictions. In particular, the organization considers that the authorities have repeatedly tried to close the camp without ever providing an adequate legal justification to the residents, until the order of 31 July 2012, in which the closure, which had been threatened since 2008, was motivated with urgent health and safety reasons. The organization has documented the deterioration of living conditions in the camp since 2010, due to the failure of the authorities to maintain its infrastructures and services, in view of the threatened closure.

Amnesty International has also criticized the lack of genuine consultation with the residents on adequate alternatives for re-housing. The local authorities are reportedly offering to resettle the families

temporarily in an emergency structure and eventually in two authorized camps: Castel Romano and La Barbuta. In a briefing published on 12 September 2012 Amnesty International concluded that authorized camps in Rome, including Castel Romano and La Barbuta, constitute ethnically segregated housing. They are destined only for Roma and are located in remote areas outside the city, where basic services are not easily accessible, including public transport. The camps are fenced, controlled by CCTV and unlawful restrictions to fundamental rights, such as to family life, apply to residents.

Amnesty International calls on the authorities to stop the forced eviction of the residents of Tor de' Cenci; ensure they have access to reparation and an effective remedy, including being able to challenge the eviction before a court of appeal; and guarantee that any current or future re-settlement of individuals living in camps is planned in genuine consultation with all camp residents and with the offer of a range of alternative adequate housing options, including equal access to social housing where appropriate.

Background:

Further information on Amnesty International's research on Tor de' Cenci can be found in the campaign briefing *On the edge – Roma, forced evictions and segregation in Italy* (Index: EUR 30/010/2012), available at: <http://www.amnesty.org/en/library/asset/EUR30/010/2012/en/f84f5df4-1047-49d5-a349-431bd6fab3ba/eur300102012en.pdf>

The closure of the Tor de' Cenci camp constitutes part of the Nomad Plan, devised by the municipality of Rome within the framework of the "Nomad Emergency" declared by the Italian government in May 2008. The Nomad Plan aims to close Rome's informal and "tolerated" camps, and resettle their residents in 12 to 13 authorized camps. There are currently eight authorized camps in Rome. Amnesty International has criticized the declaration of the "Nomad Emergency" as illegitimate and discriminatory. The organization has also criticized the Nomad Plan, because, in addition to a range of deficiencies, it is discriminatory and perpetuates and pursues ethnic segregation in housing.

The Tor de' Cenci camp was opened and built by local authorities in 1995, in a residential neighbourhood with access to a range of services, including schools for children. Since 2008, however, local authorities started referring to Tor de' Cenci as a "tolerated" camp, due to be closed as part of the city's Nomad Plan. The municipality of Rome allowed living conditions to deteriorate by failing to adequately maintain the camp's infrastructure and services, in view of its planned closure.

Amnesty International is recommending that the European Commission initiates an infringement procedure against Italy under the Race Equality Directive (2000/43/EC) for Italy's discriminatory treatment of the Roma in relation to their right to adequate housing (Index: EUR 30/011/2012).