

AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL PUBLIC STATEMENT

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Italy: Hundreds of Roma at risk of forced eviction from the informal settlement of Gianturco in Naples

Amnesty International is deeply concerned at the threat of imminent forced eviction by local authorities of approximately 1,300 Romanian Roma, living in the Gianturco informal settlement, in the city of Naples, southern Italy. Municipal authorities are planning to relocate 200 of the evicted Roma to a new segregated camp currently being built by the municipality, co-funded by the Ministry of Interior. Hundreds of residents, including children, elderly, sick and disabled people, are at risk of being rendered homeless.

Following a recent field visit to Naples – where Amnesty International researchers met with the municipal authorities and interviewed dozens of Gianturco’s residents – the organization wrote to the local authorities on 21 March urging them to halt the eviction until a genuine consultation is carried out with all affected residents to explore and identify adequate alternative housing for all, and avoid rendering hundreds of people homeless. Amnesty International also raised concerns with the Minister of Interior over the funding provided to the Naples municipality for the construction of a segregated camp as the main housing alternative for the Gianturco inhabitants. Amnesty International also launched an [Urgent Action](#), an appeal the organization uses in cases of imminent threats to individuals and communities, asking its supporters across the world to send letters to the Italian authorities urging them to prevent the expected forced eviction.

Long-standing informal settlement

The informal settlement of Gianturco hosts approximately 1,300 Roma adults and children, many living in self-built housing made of bricks, wood and metal sheets (according to the municipality 850 people live in the settlement, but the community and NGOs provided higher estimate). Dozens of families relocated there after the camp they lived in before was set on fire by unknown individuals in 2011. In fact, the destroyed camp was located in Via del Riposo, the same place where the municipality is currently building a new camp to host some of the families from Gianturco.

In recent months, inhabitants have reported frequent checks and searches by law enforcement authorities in the settlement, resulting in seizure of food stocks and cars, scooters, carts and trolleys the families use to transport recyclable materials collected from across town. They have also reported harassment by law enforcement officers who repeatedly told them to leave the camp. The community’s livelihood has been significantly affected by the prohibition by authorities to hold an informal market of second-hand goods in the square of the settlement.

“The municipality did not come to talk to us, neither did they come to ask who is sick or who is in need. They don't care about us. The police stopped us from running the market, they told us: all Gypsy out! They don't realise we have young children, we are not in a jungle, but they treat us as animals” said one resident to Amnesty International.

No adequate notice or genuine consultation of Gianturco's residents

According to information collected by Amnesty International, a court order to evict the Roma from the privately owned land where Gianturco settlement sits was issued in January 2016, calling for the eviction to take place within 30 days. Some of the families were notified of the eviction order, however many of the residents explained that they never received any documentation related to it. The municipality confirmed to Amnesty International that only a number of residents were notified of the legal proceedings by the court. While the municipality managed to negotiate extensions of the eviction deadline with the judicial authorities, the municipality told Amnesty International, on 27 February 2017, that no further extensions were possible and the eviction would take place shortly.

Despite having over a year to do so altogether no genuine consultation was carried out by the municipality to explore all feasible alternatives to the eviction and alternative housing options for all of the families.

All the residents Amnesty International researchers spoke to had very little information on what was going to happen to them. Residents were not aware of the exact date for the eviction or of the alternatives available to them. Many spoke of fear of their children ending up homeless and being forced to sleep on the streets. Others were worried about their belongings and the resources they invested over time to improve their homes in Gianturco.

“We have lived here for almost five years. I have 6 children. [The authorities] should let us stay here [in Gianturco]...if this is not possible, give us another place to stay, but we cannot be left on the streets with our children” said a 26 years old woman.

Relocation of around two hundred people to a segregated camp and risk of homelessness for many more hundreds Roma

“If they throw us away from here, I don't know where we will go. I am sick, nobody came to ask us anything. It's useless that I shout, nobody helps me. I need good living conditions, I am sick. I am here now and I don't know where I will go. I don't know what I will do,” an elderly man told Amnesty International.

According to information collected by Amnesty International, the municipality plans to move approximately two hundreds of the Gianturco inhabitants to a new segregated camp, currently being built in Via del Riposo, also in the city of Naples, with funds provided by the municipality and the Ministry of Interior. The municipality told Amnesty International that some small flats confiscated from organised crime networks will be used for rehousing some of Gianturco inhabitants. It is also offering a total of 75,000 euros as temporary support for 25 families to rent privately, subject to certain conditions. However, the municipality has acknowledged that hundreds of people, including children, will not be provided with any alternative housing and therefore are at risk of being rendered homeless.

Italian authorities in violation of regional and international human rights obligations

Amnesty International understands that the outlined housing options do not offer alternatives for all the people currently residing in Gianturco, even based on the lower estimated figure of 850 people, provided by the authorities. Furthermore, the offer of a new segregated camp as main rehousing alternative for around 200 of the inhabitants is discriminatory. The potential imminent forced eviction and the long term plan to transfer the families to a segregated mono-ethnic camp fly in the face of commitments undertaken by Italy in its own National Strategy for Roma Inclusion, adopted in 2012, which committed the authorities to end the segregation of Roma in camps; they also bring Italy in breach of international and regional human rights standards, including the EU Race Equality Directive.

Amnesty International, together with several other NGOs, have repeatedly denounced the curtailment of human rights of thousands of Roma across Italy that continue to face forced evictions, segregation in camps and discrimination in access to social housing. It is in this context that the organization has repeatedly called on the European Commission to launch infringement proceedings against Italy under the Race Equality Directive. The potential human rights violations faced by the Roma residents of the Gianturco settlement reinforce the need for such action by the European Commission without further delays.

Background

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.

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.

From the evidence collected by Amnesty International, such safeguards do not appear to be in place in relation to Gianturco's eviction thereby placing the authorities in breach of their obligations under a range of international and regional human rights treaties.

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