

URGENT ACTION

ROMA RELOCATED TO LIVE IN UNSAFE OLD OFFICE

Between 11 and 13 May, 70 Romani families were moved from their homes in the informal settlement of Craica in Baia Mare, northwestern Romania, to an inadequate and unsafe old office building. Remaining Romani residents are being pressured to move into similar buildings, through threats and intimidation by self-proclaimed representatives of the communities.

In April, the local authorities of Baia Mare gave demolition orders to **around 300 Romani families living in the informal settlements of Craica, Pirta and Garii**, giving them under a week to demolish their homes and leave.

Baia Mare municipality organised two public meetings in May to tell the families their options for relocation. The meetings were not publicised and only around 70 out of 1,600 Roma from the city's informal settlements attended. Among the alternative housing options, the local authorities offered relocation to the former office building of an industrial factory. This building has never been approved for conversion to residential use and does not meet basic adequacy standards according to both Romania's own housing regulations and international standards. It has limited sanitation facilities. Twenty families must share four bathrooms and two small kitchen areas, which do not have proper cooking and washing facilities. The building has no heating and does not comply with fire safety regulations. Despite this, 70 families from Craica agreed to move there and signed contracts for three years.

Residents of Craica, Pirta and Garii have told Amnesty International that they have been threatened, harassed and intimidated by people claiming to represent the communities, to coerce them into accepting the offer of relocation to two other former offices on the same site. Following these allegations, the local authorities assured residents that all families will be individually invited to the municipality to discuss all housing options and no negotiation will be further carried through any representative of the community. The municipality also confirmed that no family or individual will be forcibly evicted and nobody's home will be demolished without their consent. However, it appears that the municipality is not living up to its commitment as the process is taking place in a context of threats and intimidation and this clearly does not constitute a genuine consultation, as is required in any eviction process.

Please write immediately in English, Romanian or your own language:

- Urging the city authorities to carry out genuine consultation with the Romani communities of Craica, Pirta and Garii in order to identify all feasible alternatives to evictions and resettlement options, and ensure that nobody is subjected to threats, intimidation or harassment that interferes with the process of consultation;
- Urging the city authorities to ensure that the housing alternatives provided comply with adequacy requirements under domestic and international law.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS BEFORE 3 JULY 2012 TO:

Mayor of Baia Mare

Catalin Chereches
Primaria Municipiului Baia Mare
Str. Gh. Sincai nr. 37, etaj 1, cam. 9
Baia Mare, Romania
Fax: +40 262 212 332
Email: primar@baiamarecity.ro
Salutation: Dear Mayor

Prime Minister

Victor Ponta
Guvernul Romaniei
Piata Victoriei nr. 1
Bucuresti, Romania
Fax: +40 21 313 98 46
Email: drp@gov.ro
Salutation: Dear Prime Minister

And copies to:

Prefect of Maramures

Sorin Rednic
Institia Prefectului-Judetul Maramures
Str. Gheorghe Sincai nr. 46
430311 Baia Mare
Fax: +40 262 213241
Email: prefect@prefecturamaramures.ro
Salutation: Dear Prefect

Also send copies to diplomatic representatives accredited to your country. Please insert local diplomatic addresses below:

Name Address 1 Address 2 Address 3 Fax Fax number Email Email address Salutation Salutation

Please check with your section office if sending appeals after the above date. This is the first update of UA 116/12. Further information:

<http://www.amnesty.org/en/library/info/EUR39/005/2012/en>

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ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Craica, Pirita and Garii are three of the informal settlements inhabited by Romani individuals across Baia Mare. The rest of the informal settlements include Horea, Ferneziu, and Valea Borcutului. Amnesty International delegates visited Baia Mare on three occasions and met with Romani inhabitants of informal settlements of Craica, Ferneziu, Pirita and Horea. In all four areas Romani individuals live in inadequate conditions and lack access to basic services such as an adequate water supply and sanitation facilities. Romani individuals with whom Amnesty International spoke in the Ferneziu, Pirita and Craica areas had expressed their insecurity as a result of the constant threat of eviction, resulting from the lack of any formal tenancy, and the absence of adequate information about decisions that affect their lives.

On two previous occasions, Amnesty International has opposed the municipality's proposed plans to forcibly evict hundreds of Roma and other socially disadvantaged people from the informal settlements of Craica, Ferneziu, Horea and Valea Borcutului. In July 2010, the then Vice-mayor announced plans to forcibly evict more than one thousand Romani inhabitants of the Craica neighbourhood and resettle them in an industrial area on the outskirts of Baia Mare without the necessary safeguards required under international human rights law which Romania is subject to. In August 2011, the current mayor of Baia Mare announced a similar plan to evict hundreds of Roma and other socially disadvantaged people who lacked residency identity papers from four areas of the city and return them back to their places of origin. Both times the plans were dropped due mainly to the concerted actions of national and international NGOs, including Amnesty International members, and the USA embassy in Bucharest.

However, the municipality is now beginning to implement its plans to relocate settlement residents. Amnesty International is deeply concerned that the recent process of relocation of the Roma residents from the informal settlements across Baia Mare is not preceded by a genuine consultation of all individuals and families affected. Numerous residents have not been adequately informed regarding the housing options made available to them by the municipality and have not had the chance to raise their concerns with the local authorities. Dozens of Roma residents continue to receive information from self-proclaimed leaders of the Romani communities to whom the municipality appears to have delegated the process of liaising with the affected families. However, it is unclear that such 'leaders' are at all representative of the community and instead of genuinely consulting with residents are threatening, intimidating and harassing those who do not want to leave their homes and refuse relocation, telling them they have no option but to move to the wholly inadequate accommodation at the former CUPROM factory as their homes will be demolished and they will be left homeless.

Amnesty International is also deeply concerned that the alternative housing provided to the Roma residents at the CUPROM factory falls short of the adequacy standards required by both Romania's own law and its international obligations particularly in relation to the lack of services, overcrowding and general habitability.

The former office building of the industrial factory CUPROM was one of the relocation options suggested by the Baia Mare municipality, however no concrete information was provided nor to the Romani residents, nor to Amnesty International on the location or conditions of the housing alternatives.

Name: Communities in Craica, Pirita and Garii
Gender m/f: both

Further information on UA: 116/12 Index: EUR 39/008/2012 Issue Date: 22 May 2012