

# URGENT ACTION

## INADEQUATE REFUGEE HOUSING IN MONTENEGRO

**In early October work began on replacement housing for Roma and Ashkali people displaced from Kosovo. They had lost their homes and possessions in a fire at a refugee collective centre in Konik, Podgorica. The new housing – metal containers – does not meet international standards for adequate housing.**

In July 2012, after the fire, the government promised to provide more than 800 Roma and Ashkali with alternative accommodation within three months and appealed for international funding to provide this accommodation. At the beginning of August 2012, the government adopted a plan to buy and install metal containers, which they proposed as a mid-term accommodation solution. Work started on the site in early October, and the installation of 216 containers is expected to begin shortly, to be completed by the end of November.

The homeless Roma and Ashkali families were initially provided with tents near the camp at Konik. This was provided by the Montenegrin Red Cross, in cooperation with the government's Emergency Situations and Civil Security Sector. They were given emergency humanitarian aid, including food and personal hygiene materials, by the UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR) and others.

There are grave concerns that the Konik families are likely to end up living in these containers for at least three or four years. This is when the construction of housing under the government-led Action Plan – agreed upon with the European Commission in 2007 – is expected to be completed. The first stage of the plan was to provide housing for those living at Konik camp 1. Until this permanent solution is in place, Konik 1 residents require a sufficient mid-term housing solution.

Konik 1 and 2 is the largest collective centre for displaced people in the Balkans. The fire at the centre destroyed 38 huts, which were home to around 150 families with around 800 members.

### **Please write immediately in English or your own language, urging the authorities to:**

- Provide the Konik families with immediate access to adequate alternative housing – not containers – while they await a more durable solution as set out in the government's Action Plan;
- Bring forward the programme for construction of housing under the Action Plan;
- Remove any obstacles to the construction programme, including by adopting a Law on Social housing;
- Ensure that the resettlement to permanent housing provides adequate alternative accommodation for the Konik families; is carried out according to international standards and in full consultation with the community; and does not result in the creation of a segregated settlement.

### **PLEASE SEND APPEALS BEFORE 22 NOVEMBER 2012 TO:**

Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of

Justice and Human Rights

Dusko Markovic

Vuka Karadzica 3

81 000 Podgorica, Montenegro

Fax: +382 20 407 515

Email: kabinet@mpa.gov.me

Salutation: **Dear Minister**

Minister of Interior

Ivan Brajovic

Bulevar Svetog Petra Cetinjskog 6

81 000 Podgorica

Montenegro

Fax: +382 20 246 779

Email: kabinet@mup.gov.me

Salutation: **Dear Minister**

**And copies to:**

Mayor of Podgorica

Miomir Mugosa

Njegoseva 13

81 000 Podgorica

Montenegro

Email: pggradonacelnik@t-com.me

Salutation: **Dear Mr. Mugosa**

**Also send copies to diplomatic representatives accredited to your country.**

Please check with your section office if sending appeals after the above date.

**AMNESTY  
INTERNATIONAL**



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## INADEQUATE REFUGEE HOUSING IN MONTENEGRO

### ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

More than 1,500 Roma and Ashkali have lived at refugee camps Konik 1 and 2 since they fled Kosovo in 1999, following human rights abuses perpetrated by Kosovo Albanians. Some 2,994 Roma and Ashkali from Kosovo remain in Montenegro. Only 54 Roma or Ashkali returned to Kosovo in 2011.

An Action Plan, agreed with the European Commission in 2007, provides for durable solutions for Kosovo Roma and Ashkali, including plans to demolish camps at Konik and replace them with adequate housing for some 1,200 individuals. The first stage of the plan was to provide housing for those living at Konik camp 1. Implementing the plan has been very slow. Amnesty International is therefore concerned that with the slow progress being made on plans to provide permanent housing, the Roma and Ashkali refugees – made homeless by the recent fire – may need temporary accommodation in the meantime.

To date, the affected population has not been consulted on the plans for housing, which is not in accordance with international standards. NGOs and the Roma refugees have raised concerns that the plans may result in a segregated settlement. Further, the working group does not include any representatives of the affected population.

In 2011, UNHCR estimated that some 1,600 Roma (predominantly those displaced from Kosovo) were at risk of statelessness. Under the Law on Foreigners, they may apply for temporary or permanent residency in Montenegro. However, personal documentation is required to obtain residency. Roma face many barriers in obtaining these documents.

Many of the Roma and Ashkali lost personal documents, including passports in the fire. Without these, they cannot access their rights, including temporary residency in Montenegro. UNHCR, together with its implementing partner, is planning to organize visits to Kosovo and Serbia where the displaced will get new passports.

Name: Over 800 Roma and Ashkali

Gender m/f: Both

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