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Romanian authorities leave 15 Roma families homeless and many more at risk

The Romanian authorities must immediately halt all forced evictions and provide those Romani families who were recently forced out of their homes with alternative housing, Amnesty International said after 15 families (at least 60 people) were left homeless in the city of Baia Mare yesterday.

“The situation of those who were forced out of their homes is desperate with many, including babies and young children, now sleeping rough. Many have described how police came in with bulldozers to demolish their homes. The authorities are still doing nothing to help them,” said Jezerca Tigani, Europe and Central Asia Deputy Director at Amnesty International.

“We are extremely worried for the hundreds of people left in the settlement, including children who could also be evicted at any moment.”

The Craica settlement in the city of Baia Mare is one of the largest Roma communities in Romania.

On 2 August, approximately 30 families received demolition orders issued by the local police. The authorities informed residents their property lacked the necessary authorization and had to be demolished by 5 August.

The residents were reportedly told that if they demolished their houses, they would be allowed to build new ones in a different part of Craica. Three families complied with the order but no alternative accommodation was provided and they are afraid to construct new improvised houses elsewhere for fear of further evictions.

The police and two bulldozers are still present in the area.

Cristina, a single mother of six who is now sleeping on the street together with her children told Amnesty International: “I have been living here for 10 years. Nobody came to discuss this with us: we just received the notices, that's all. Now we are homeless.”

For the last three nights, mother of two Maria has been sleeping on the streets with her children and partner. Their house was demolished on Monday, two days after receiving a notice to clear the area.

“We are sleeping outside. There are rats and if the weather turns bad we have nowhere to go. And it is not just me, there are many people in this situation,” she said.

“These evictions are prohibited under international law by which Romania is bound. An eviction can only be carried out only after proper consultation and those affected should be offered adequate alternative housing,” said Jezerca Tigani.

Since 2010, Amnesty International and local human rights organizations managed to prevent a number of evictions in the area.

In May 2012, however, the city Mayor ordered the eviction of half of the settlement - around 500 people – who were relocated to inadequate housing conditions in the buildings of a former chemical factory.