

URGENT ACTION

THOUSANDS FACING FORCED EVICTION IN GHANA

Thousands of people living and working next to disused railway lines in Accra, Ghana face imminent forced eviction to make way for the redevelopment of the railway system. Known as the Railway Dwellers, the men, women and children who live and trade in kiosks and small structures built along the railway lines face homelessness and destitution if they are forcibly evicted from their homes.

On 1 December, vans with megaphones visited informal settlements located next to railway lines in Agbogbloshie, Accra. The van ordered people to dismantle their homes and businesses and vacate the area within two weeks. The announcement warned that any structure not removed within two weeks would be demolished. Some structures have previously been marked for demolition with crosses and instructions to vacate by 11 November 2010. On 7 December, the Accra Metropolitan Authority stated on their website that structures along the railway lines in Accra would be demolished as part of nationwide plans to redevelop Ghana's railway system.

Some residents have lived along the railway in Accra for over 17 years. Ghanaian authorities have not provided any alternative housing to the residents, and have no plans to do so after the evictions.

Previous demolitions have been accompanied by an excessive use of force by police and other security forces. In September, two people were killed and 15 others seriously injured after police and soldiers used live and rubber bullets and tear gas on a crowd of people protesting against the demolition of their businesses at Canoe Beach in Tema. Residents of the neighbouring Tema New Town were also injured in the incident.

PLEASE WRITE IMMEDIATELY in English or your own language:

- Calling on the Minister of Transport and the Chief Executive of Accra Metropolitan Authority to immediately halt the planned demolition of structures along the railway lines in Accra,
- Urging them to adopt a moratorium on all evictions until all necessary safeguards are put in place to ensure that evictions are carried out in accordance with international and regional human rights standards, including the development of a resettlement plan to provide adequate alternative housing to residents.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS BEFORE 20 JANUARY 2010 TO:

Minister of Transport

Hon. Mike Hammah

Ministry of Transport

P. O. Box 251

Ghana

Fax: +233 21-689654

Email: poharail@yahoo.com

Salutation: Dear Honourable Minister

Acting Chief Executive, Ghana Railway

Company Ltd

Emmanuel Opoku

P.O. Box 251

Ghana

Fax: +233 21-689654

Email: graildeva@hotmail.com

Salutation: Dear Chief Executive

And copies to:

Hon Dr. Alfred Vanderpuije

Chief Executive

Accra Metropolitan Authority

P.O Box GP 385

Accra, Ghana

Fax: +233 302 663388

Salutation: Dear Honourable Chief Executive

Also send copies to diplomatic representatives of Ghana accredited to your country. Please check with your section office if sending appeals after the above date.

**AMNESTY
INTERNATIONAL**



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ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Forced evictions are evictions those carried out without adequate notice and consultation with those affected, without legal safeguards and without assurances of adequate alternative accommodation.

Under international law, including the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR), to which it is a State Party, Ghana is prohibited from carrying out forced evictions, and must protect people from forced evictions. Evictions may only be carried out as a last resort, once all other feasible alternatives to eviction have been explored in genuine consultation with affected communities. The authorities must ensure that no one is made homeless. Adequate alternative housing and compensation for all losses must be made available to those affected prior to eviction. These requirements apply to all settlements, regardless of their tenure status, including informal settlements. Even when people do not have legal tenure, government authorities may not forcibly evict people from their homes.

In their preparation for demolition of the railway structures, the Ghanaian authorities have failed to put in place legal protections and other safeguards from forced eviction, such as genuine consultation with communities to identify alternatives to evictions and resettlement options, adequate prior notice, and effective legal remedies. They have failed to provide adequate alternative accommodation and compensation. These are all required under international law.

The Ministry of Transport and state-owned Ghana Railway Corporation have previously given notice of demolition for structures along the railway of 15 October 2009 and 11 November 2010, but these demolitions were never carried out and residents are still living there.

On 26 November 2010, the Government of Ghana signed a US\$6 billion contract with a Chinese company for the construction and expansion of railway infrastructure in Ghana. This “revamping” of the railways, according to the government of Ghana, requires the demolition of the “illegal structures” that have been constructed within 50 feet of the railway, and the removal of the “squatters” that inhabit them.

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