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Serbia must halt forced eviction of 1000 people from Belvil settlement

More than a thousand people, over 250 Roma families, who reside in Belvil settlement in Belgrade are at risk to be forcibly evicted on Thursday morning. If the eviction proceeds tomorrow, the Belgrade City authorities will be blatantly flouting international standards that Serbia is party to, Amnesty International said.

The city authorities have failed to provide information, adequate notice, legal remedies and consult people on the plans for evictions. People interviewed by Amnesty International said that they had not even been told why they are being evicted.

The Roma families, some of whom are registered as residents of Belgrade and others who are Internally Displaced Persons from Kosovo were told yesterday they will be resettled in metal containers in four segregated settlements. Three of these resettlement sites are far away from the city and their sources of work.

People who are not registered as residents of Belgrade are being returned to their original municipalities, with dubious promises that they will be provided support.

Most of the NGOs and the European Commission thought 40 families were going to be evicted - until yesterday when they were suddenly told that over 250 families would be evicted.

People were handed slips of paper telling them which container settlement they would be moved to. This makes a mockery of the international requirements of adequate notice and consultation and the city must cancel the eviction planned for tomorrow and put in a place a consultation process which adheres to human right standards.

The European Commission has committed to providing 3.5 million Euros for permanent housing solutions for the Belvil residents.

The European Commission must immediately call on the Belgrade city authorities to cancel the eviction planned for tomorrow and start a proper process of consultation with the residents of Belvil.

The European Commission must be unequivocal that any financial support is contingent on the city complying with international safeguards. There must be no mixed messages suggesting that the European Commission condones the Belgrade city authorities' blatantly flawed process for carrying out this eviction.

Families in the community are fearful about what will happen to them, particularly to people with health issues and their children, if the flawed eviction plans go ahead.

"They are going to demolish the house on Thursday. I don't know where I will go. I will sleep in the park, in the street during the summer – I don't know what I will do in winter," said a 50 year old man from Southern Serbia. He and his wife have lived in Belvil for the past six years.

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