

# AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL

## QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

This document must not be distributed as an official AI statement. It is distributed to enable Spokespeople and Press Officers to give verbal briefings to media.

AI Index: POL 10/022/2013  
15 May 2013

### Amnesty International Report 2013 Roma: Questions and Answers

#### **Why are you concerned with the rights of Roma?**

Across Europe, Roma continue to be victims of widespread, often systemic, human rights violations:

- A high level of prejudice of prejudice against Roma continues to exist within sectors of European societies and are aired in some instances by public officials;
- Roma children continue to attend segregated classes and schools designed for pupils with “mild mental disabilities”;
- Roma often face violent attacks which are not investigated thoroughly or at all taking into account the racial element of such crimes;
- Roma families continue to be forcibly evicted from their homes in countries across Europe, including France, Romania, Serbia and Italy;
- Some face homelessness while others are offered inadequate ‘temporary’ housing solutions by authorities in which they find themselves still living ten years later;
- The circle of discrimination continues and follows Roma when they try to access employment or access their political and civil rights.

#### **Why are you campaigning for adequate housing for Roma?**

In many European countries Roma are being forcibly evicted from informal settlements, where they live because they do not have access to alternative housing options such as social housing. In some cases, authorities relocate Romani communities who have been forcibly evicted to segregated Roma-only areas, sometimes in houses that do not comply with basic hygienic and other habitability criteria.

Due to discrimination, unemployment of Roma is high and they often cannot afford to rent houses on the private market. The obligation is on governments to ensure that everyone, including the Roma, has access to adequate housing and make sure they are protected against forced eviction.

#### **Why are you opposed to evictions considering the appalling conditions in which some Roma communities live?**

We do not oppose per se evictions of Roma communities from areas and districts where their health or safety is at risk when these are conducted in line with international standards, ie provided that these communities are duly informed, consulted, given the possibility to oppose the eviction and given alternative and adequate housing options.

**Will the decision of Italy’s Supreme Court at the beginning of May 2013 to declare the so-called “Nomad emergency” unlawful and unfounded end forced evictions and segregation of Roma in the country?**

The state of emergency, declared by the government and in force between May 2008 and November 2011, had led to widespread human rights violations and increased discrimination against Romani people. Roma were targeted in an unlawful census based on ethnicity and deprived of safeguards against forced evictions, which resulted in thousands being made homeless in several Italian cities. They were also increasingly segregated in camps set up by the authorities. Notwithstanding this important decision, however, discrimination against Roma and violations of their rights in Italy continue.

**What can the European Union do in order to protect the rights of Roma?**

All EU Member States have obligations stemming from their own Constitutions, the International Human Rights Conventions to which they are party and EU anti-discrimination legislation to combat discrimination. In the case of the Roma however they are pitifully failing to do so.

The European Commission as the guardian of EU law must use all of its legal and political instruments, to ensure that its member states' legislation, policies and practices are in line with EU anti-discrimination law.

Some European national authorities target Roma through forced evictions, foster residential segregation. Some also segregate Roma pupils in Roma-only classes or classes for pupils with mild mental disabilities. Where this is happening the European Commission needs to take action.

End/