

AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL PUBLIC STATEMENT

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A public company should not be allowed to evict Romani community without the necessary protection

More than 400 people living in a Romani settlement in Cantonului Street at the outskirts of Romanian town Cluj-Napoca are at risk of being forcibly evicted. A public company, National Railways (CFR) SA Bucuresti which administers the land in the area, requested a court order for the immediate removal of the houses.

Amnesty International urges the CFR to ensure that in the event of a court order authorizing the removal, essential human rights safeguards are observed. Any eviction of people without adequate notice, genuine consultation on alternatives, and provision of adequate alternative accommodation and compensation would amount to a forced eviction and violate international and regional human rights standards that Romania is a party to.

The CFR has requested that the Court issue an ordinance requiring residents to demolish their homes themselves, otherwise the company will be allowed to carry out the demolition and charge the residents for all related costs. Amnesty International is concerned that the CFR requested a decision with an immediate effect, without including a due date or allowing time for consultation. The Court in Cluj-Napoca will hold a hearing on the request next week.

Amnesty International calls on the Romanian authorities involved in this case – the National Railways, the Ministry of Transport, The Ministry of Regional Development and the municipality of Cluj-Napoca – to ensure that they comply with binding international standards on right to housing of the inhabitants of Cantonului Street. Under international and regional human rights treaties that Romania is a party to, evictions may only be carried out as a last resort, once all other feasible alternatives have been explored in genuine consultation with affected communities.

Some of the families were reportedly relocated to Cantonului Street by the municipal authorities in 2000. In some cases, the dwellers had a verbal agreement with the municipality to construct houses. There were also individuals and families who had rental agreements with the municipality.

Amnesty International urges the municipality of Cluj-Napoca, as well as the national authorities to ensure that any resettlement of the community from Cantonului Street will fulfil the criteria for adequacy of housing under international human rights law. These requirements apply regardless of whether the dwellers rent, own, occupy or lease the land or housing in question.

Amnesty International has previously expressed its concern over the forced eviction by municipal authorities of 56 Romani families from Coastei Street, at the centre of Cluj-Napoca, on 17 December 2010. The new housing units to which some of the families were moved are segregated and located close to the city's garbage dump and a former chemical waste dump, in violation of inhabitants' right to a healthy environment. Against this background, Amnesty International is particularly concerned at the potential threat of forced eviction of the inhabitants of Cantonului Street.

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