

URGENT ACTION

VICIOUS CIRCLE OF FORCED EVICTIONS IN SERBIA

The authorities in Belgrade, Serbia's capital, are preparing to carry out the latest in a series of forced evictions of Roma communities living in informal settlements. At least 70 homes in an area known as Vidikovac will be demolished. The families who live there could be left homeless as a result of the evictions.

In mid-June, **Romani families living in Vidikovac**, an area in the Belgrade municipality of Ćukarica, received eviction notices, stating that their houses would be demolished in early July. While the evictions did not take place in early July, Amnesty International understands that they may take place within the next few days. The families are worried they could be forced out of their homes at any time without warning. They have not been consulted by the city authorities; they have not been offered any compensation or alternative accommodation.

A number of Roma families living in Vidikovac were forcibly returned to Serbia from several European Union (EU) states between 2006 and 2008. Many of them originate from southern Serbia, which they had left in the 1990s to seek better economic opportunities. In their home towns they do not have access to adequate housing or employment opportunities and, on return to Serbia, they therefore joined other Roma living in informal settlements across Belgrade. The Belgrade authorities plan to remove all the city's informal Roma settlements. However, they have failed to come up with a sustainable solution that ensures the human rights of the inhabitants of these settlements. As a result, those in the settlements live in constant fear of forced eviction.

Under international law, evictions may be carried out only as a last resort, once other alternatives have been explored in genuine consultation with the affected communities. The authorities then have a duty to provide them with adequate notice; and must ensure that no families are made homeless or vulnerable to the violation of other human rights as a consequence of eviction. This includes providing them with legal remedies, including provision of adequate compensation. The Serbian government has a duty to ensure that the authorities in Belgrade abide by international law.

PLEASE WRITE IMMEDIATELY in English or your own language:

- Urging the city authorities not to forcibly evict the Romani families living in Vidikovac;
- Calling on them to develop a comprehensive and sustainable resettlement and compensation plan for the Vidikovac community and all affected communities in Belgrade.
- Urging them to ensure that any such resettlement plans are developed in genuine consultation with the Vidikovac community, and fully respect their human rights, including the right to adequate housing.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS BEFORE 10 SEPTEMBER 2010 TO:

Mayor of Belgrade

Dragan Djilas
 Dragoslava Jovanovica 2,
 Belgrade 11000, Serbia
Email: gradonacelnik@beogradsg.org.rs
Alternative email:
natasa.golubovic@beogradsg.org.rs
Salutation: Dear Mr Djilas

Copies to:

Minister for Human and Minority Rights
 Svetozar Ciplić
 Bulevar Mihaila Pupina 2
 11000 Beograd, Serbia
Email: kabinet@ljudskaprava.gov.rs
Fax: +381 11 311 39 29

Also send copies to:

President of the Republic of Serbia
 Boris Tadic
 Predsednik Republike Srbije
 Andricev Venac 1
 11000 Beograd, Serbia
Email:
kontakt.predsednik@predsednik.rs

ALSO SEND COPIES TO: Minister for Labour and Social Policy Rasim Ljajić, Bulevar Mihaila Pupina 2, Belgrade 11000, Serbia **Fax:** +381 11 3114-650 **Email:** ministar@minrzs.gov.rs or sluzba@minrzs.gov.rs and to diplomatic representatives of Serbia accredited to your country. Please check with your section office if sending appeals after the above date.

**AMNESTY
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ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

The Vidikovac settlement has been growing since early 2010, after people forcibly evicted from two other informal settlements in Belgrade came to live at the site.

In April 2010, 35 Roma families were forcibly evicted from another settlement in the Vidikovac area, just across the street from current settlement. They were not provided with any alternative accommodation, assistance or compensation by the Belgrade city authorities. Without alternative accommodation, many of the families collected what was left of their houses and their personal belongings and moved to the other side of the road, joining other families that were already living there.

More recently, another group of 20 families joined the Vidikovac settlement after being forcibly evicted in April from an informal Roma settlement at Lazarus Kujundzic Street, also in the Municipality of Čukarica. The authorities had destroyed the homes of 38 families without adequate notice or advance consultation. They were not provided with sufficient time to gather their moveable property and were only able to rescue the few belongings they could carry in their hands. Municipal officials and representatives of the Roma National Council were present during this eviction and promised the Roma community alternative accommodation, food and assistance; they also stated that those originating from southern Serbia would receive assistance to relocate to their home towns in the south. However, these commitments did not materialize.

Of these 38 evicted families, 20 now live in Vidikovac. Four families whose residency is registered in Belgrade, remain at the old demolished site without any shelter. Some families, also with residency in Belgrade, managed to get temporary shelter at a Roma cultural centre. The rest reportedly moved to other informal settlements in Belgrade, including Belvil – an informal settlement in Novi Beograd that is also awaiting eviction.

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