

# URGENT ACTION

## FAMILIES FACE FORCED EVICTION IN SERBIA

**Twenty-seven Roma families, including some displaced from Kosovo, are facing forced eviction from their homes in Belgrade, the capital city of Serbia. They will be left homeless if the Serbian government goes ahead with the eviction.**

On 1 November, the City of Belgrade Inspectorate, an administrative body within the city authorities, gave the 27 families 48 hours' notice to leave their homes. The families all live in Block 61 in the New Belgrade area of the city. The authorities are preparing to evict the informal Roma settlement at the request of the Building Directorate of Serbia, a state-owned company that plans to build commercial housing on the site.

Twenty of the families are internally displaced, having fled Kosovo after the war there in 1999. Many of their children were born in Serbia. The families had not previously been consulted about the eviction or offered any alternative accommodation, as required by international law. If the eviction goes ahead as planned they are likely to be homeless this winter, and may be forced to sleep out in the open. The temperature in Serbia will start falling below zero degrees Celsius in the next few weeks.

The settlement is situated on land owned by the government of Serbia, which gave the go-ahead for the building project on 25 August 2011. This is the first eviction of a Roma settlement in Belgrade to be carried out on behalf of the government. The eviction is likely to be carried out swiftly as the company wants to start the work on the apartment blocks before the end of the year.

**Please write immediately in English or your own language to the authorities in Serbia, urging them to:**

- Stop the forced eviction of Roma families living in Block 61 in Belgrade, which violates Serbia's responsibilities under international law;
- Provide adequate alternative housing for the families affected,
- Provide assistance and protection to internally displaced persons living in informal settlements in Serbia as required by the UN Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement.

### PLEASE SEND APPEALS BEFORE 01 DECEMBER 2011 TO:

Serbian Prime Minister

Mirko Cvetkovic  
Nemanjina 11  
11 000  
Belgrade  
Serbia  
Fax: +381 11 3617609  
Email: [predsednikvladesrbije@gov.rs](mailto:predsednikvladesrbije@gov.rs)  
**Salutation: Dear Prime Minister**

Building Directorate of Serbia

General Manager  
Dragan Grujic  
Blvd Kralja Aleksandra 84  
11000 Belgrade  
Serbia  
Fax: +381 11 3209 807  
Email: [office@gds.rs](mailto:office@gds.rs)  
**Salutation: Dear Sir**

**And copies to:**

Minister for Human and Minority Rights,  
Public Administration and Local Self-  
Government  
Milan Markovic  
Bircaninova 6  
11 000  
Belgrade  
Serbia  
Email: [kabinet@mduls.gov.rs](mailto:kabinet@mduls.gov.rs)  
**Salutation: Dear Minister**

**Also send copies to diplomatic representatives accredited to your country.**

Please check with your section office if sending appeals after the above date.

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### ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Amnesty International is extremely concerned at the rising number of forced evictions of Roma communities living in informal settlements in Belgrade. Serbia is a state party to international and regional human rights treaties which prohibit forced evictions, including the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights. In particular the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights in their General Comment 7 have stated that “evictions should not result in individuals being rendered homeless or vulnerable to the violation of other human rights”. The Serbian government has failed to prevent forced evictions of Roma by the City of Belgrade, who not only lose their homes, but often their livelihoods and their only possessions.

Internally displaced persons from Kosovo are particularly vulnerable. In 2009, the Representative of the Secretary-General on the human rights of internally displaced persons (IDPs), Walter Kälin, reported that “almost a third of all Roma IDPs (32%, compared to 6.9% for non-Roma IDPs) surveyed reported to live in an object not intended for housing”. The Representative also expressed concern about the increasing number of forced evictions of Roma in Belgrade, including the eviction of IDPs from Kosovo, from informal settlements to clear space for public infrastructure projects. The Representative recommended that “the Government, [to] develop, in close consultation with civil society, international organizations and the Serbian Ombudsman, clear and uniform guidelines that direct municipal and other concerned authorities on how to handle such cases in line with international standards.”

While the government has recognized Roma from Kosovo as IDPs, the government has failed to provide Roma IDPs living in informal settlements with basic rights or other forms of protection set out in the UN Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement, including an adequate standard of living, which includes: essential food and potable water; basic shelter and housing; essential medical services and sanitation.

This will be the third forced eviction to take place in Belgrade within the last month. Each resulted in people being rendered homeless. Activists who tried to prevent evictions from happening were arrested.

The Serbian government should adopt a law prohibiting forced evictions, which would ensure that the processes and safeguards, set out in the UN Guidelines and Principles on Development Based Evictions and Resettlement, are in place before any evictions are carried out.

Amnesty International representatives met with the Serbian government in October and delivered over 20,000 petitions asking for a law to prohibit forced evictions. The deputy prime minister of Serbia Božidar Đelić has yet to agree that such a law is necessary.

Name: n/a

Gender m/f: Both

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