

AI Index: PRE 01/078/2010
11 March 2010

Italian authorities urged to stop forced evictions of Roma

We always dream that our children will have a house to live in, so they will not be called “gypsies”
Elpida, a Macedonian Roma, mother of six, who came to Italy in 1991 with her husband. Both have residence permits.

(Rome) Amnesty International has called on the authorities to review a controversial housing plan that has resulted in the forced eviction of hundreds of Roma and paves the way for thousands more over the coming months.

In a new briefing paper, [*The Wrong Answer - Italy’s “Nomad Plan” violates the housing rights of Roma in Rome.*](#) Amnesty International has warned that the programme, which began in July 2009, violates the human rights of thousands of Roma.

The measures envisage the destruction of over 100 Roma settlements across the capital and an estimated 6,000 Roma are to be resettled into just 13 new or expanded camps on the outskirts of the city. The plan is likely to leave more than 1,000 Roma homeless.

“These measures urgently need to be rethought. Roma families across the Italian capital now face losing their possessions, their social contacts, their access to work and to state services,” said Ignacio Jovtis, Amnesty International’s expert on Italy.

“There is also a risk that if the plan is implemented it could be used as a blueprint for forced evictions in other Italian regions. Evictions without prior consultation and the offer of adequate alternative accommodation to all of those affected are a violation of their human rights.”

In the last few months, hundreds of Roma families have already been evicted from at least five different camps. Prior to the closure of Casilino 900, one of Europe’s largest Roma camps, in February this year, a number of Roma leaders were extensively consulted. However, international human rights standards require consultation with all evicted residents.

Without officially being part of the Nomad Plan, the closure of Casilino 700 in November 2009 took place without any prior consultation and resulted in hundreds of Roma being left homeless. The residents of many other non-authorised camps risk the same fate, raising questions as to how comprehensive the plan really is.

“Many Roma live in shacks and caravans lacking basic hygienic conditions. The current situation is the result of years of neglect, inadequate policies and discrimination by successive administrations. The attempt to address this legacy is, in itself, welcome and the living conditions of many Roma will be improved. But the plan is incomplete and risks making the situation for many other Roma even worse. It is the wrong answer.”

Ignacio Jovtis said.

Instead of offering Roma access to proper housing, the authorities are shuffling them off into remote camps. This exacerbates further the obstacles and discrimination Roma face when applying for the regular employment that would enable them to afford private accommodation.

Roma people living in camps are de facto excluded from accessing social housing as the current points-based system requires expulsion from private accommodation. This needs to be changed.

Amnesty International believes that in its current form the “Nomad Plan” fails to meet Italy’s obligation to ensure that there is no discrimination against particular groups or segregation in housing.

“The plan is called the ‘Nomad Plan’. But most of the Roma affected are not nomadic at all. By labelling all Roma nomadic and treating them as such, the initiators of this plan are perpetuating the very problems they are purporting to address,” Ignacio Jovtis said.

Background

Between 12,000 and 15,000 Roma are estimated to be living in and around Rome.

Around 3,000 of these are Italian Sinti, who have long roots in the country. Since the 1960s, many Roma have arrived from the former Yugoslav states. A large proportion of these now have residence permits, and many of their children are Italian citizens. Over the last decade, a significant number of Roma have also arrived from the new EU member states, in particular Romania. While a few thousand of the Roma in Rome live in permanent accommodation, the majority live in different kinds of camps

In recent years, the Italian authorities have taken a number of discriminatory measures that have contributed to the stigmatization of Roma living in the country. Forced evictions have become more frequent since special security agreements were concluded between the national government and various local authorities as a result of which some powers were transferred from the Ministry of Interior to the local authorities. The aim was to address perceived security threats, including those supposedly posed by the presence of Roma communities in cities.

See also:

[*Italy: The witch-hunt against Roma people must end*](#)

Italy: Anti-Roma events in Italy are a wake up call for the EU

Note to editors:

Through the Demand Dignity campaign, Amnesty International is calling on governments globally to take all necessary measures, including the adoption of laws and policies that comply with international human rights law, to prohibit and prevent forced evictions.