

AI Index: PRE 01/285/2009
28 July 2009

Kenya: Government should provide emergency shelter for the thousands forcibly evicted from their homes in winter

Kenya's government should provide emergency shelter and other humanitarian aid to the 3,000 people forcibly evicted from their homes and who are now exposed to the cold and rain of Kenya's winter, Amnesty International said today.

Last week, police told residents of Githogoro Village, Nairobi, they had 72 hours to dismantle their homes before the bulldozers, which were lined up at the edge of the settlement, moved in. The evictions appear to have been carried out as part of the government of Kenya's plans to build a new road, the Northern Bypass.

"It's a disgrace that thousands of men, woman and children were evicted without adequate notice or consultation and during the season in which the Kenyan weather is at its worst," said Irene Khan, Amnesty International's Secretary General. "Many families have been living in the settlement for almost fifty years and now have no option but to sleep in the rubble of their homes."

Communal toilets were also reportedly destroyed as part of the forcible evictions, increasing the risk of the spread of disease among the remaining residents who have inadequate access to clean water and other essential services.

"The Kenyan authorities have a duty of care towards their citizens and should ensure the victims of these forced evictions have access to shelter, clean water and other essential services," said Irene Khan. "Kenya's government is failing to deliver on its promise to comply with international human rights law regarding evictions and until it does, there should be an immediate end to all forced evictions."

Since the establishment of the very first informal settlements in Kenya, large-scale forced evictions have regularly occurred in a manner that contravenes international human rights standards. In a report released in June 2009 Amnesty International identified up to 127,000 people in Nairobi at immediate risk of having their makeshift homes and informal businesses demolished under a government-led plan to clean up the river basin.

Through its Demand Dignity campaign, launched in May 2009, 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.

Notes to editors:

- Amnesty International's Demand Dignity campaign aims to end the human rights violations that drive and deepen global poverty. The campaign will mobilise people all over the world to demand that governments, corporations and others who have power listen to the voices of those living in poverty and recognise and

protect their rights. For more information visit <http://demanddignity.amnesty.org/campaigns-en/>

- In June 2009 Amnesty International's Secretary General Irene Khan led a high level mission to Nairobi, Kenya. Irene Khan met residents and activists in Soweto (Kibera) and Korogocho settlements. Amnesty International delegates also visited the Deep Sea settlement. Irene Khan and other Amnesty International delegates participated in a march of several hundred people from settlements all over Nairobi to demand their right to adequate housing
- Kenyans can send a free SMS to 3221 and tell their government what living with dignity and housing rights mean to them
- Some two million people live in Nairobi's slums, this is approximately half the city's population