

URGENT ACTION

DEMAND HOUSING FOR FAMILIES FOLLOWING FIRE

On 24 July, more than 800 Roma and Ashkali people displaced from Kosovo had their homes and possessions destroyed following a fire at their settlement in the outskirts of Montenegro's capital, Podgorica. Amnesty International is calling on the authorities to immediately provide them with adequate alternative accommodation.

The Roma and Ashkali families are now living in tents set up next to the burned-out settlement in the suburb of Konik, by the Montenegrin Red Cross, in cooperation with the government's Emergency Situations and Civil Security Sector. They have been given emergency humanitarian aid, including food and hygienic materials, by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and others. Many people lost their personal documents in the fire, without which they cannot access their rights.

Roma and Ashkali families are very concerned that the tents they have been given are made out of flammable nylon and the temperatures inside can very quickly become unbearable. The temperature in Podgorica is currently over 30 degrees Celsius. On 25 July, around 60 Roma from Konik marched to the city to demonstrate in front of the main government building and at UNHCR headquarters. They demanded a permanent housing solution, and called out: "We do not want tents".

On 26 July the government agreed to provide alternative accommodation within three months, and will appeal for international funding to provide accommodation for the Roma and Ashkali in metal containers. Amnesty International does not consider that these containers meet international standards for alternative adequate housing, even on a temporary basis. Under an Action Plan agreed with the European Commission, the government was planning to demolish the Konik collective centres and replace them with adequate housing. However, building work is not anticipated to start until 2013.

Please write immediately in English or your own language:

- Provide the Konik families with immediate access to temporary adequate alternative housing – not containers - and enable them to move out of the tents as quickly as possible;
- Immediately provide assistance, through the Ministry of Interior, in conjunction with UNHCR and implementing partners, to those who have lost personal documentation in the fire, so that their documents are replaced free of charge without delay;
- Bring forward the programme for construction of housing under the Action Plan;
- Ensure that the resettlement to permanent housing provides adequate alternative accommodation for the Konik families; is carried out according to international standards and in full consultation with the community, and does not result in the creation of a segregated settlement;

PLEASE SEND APPEALS BEFORE 7 SEPTEMBER 2012 TO:

Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of
Justice and Human Rights
Dusko Markovic
Vuka Karadzica 3
81 000 Podgorica, Montenegro
Fax: +382 20 407 515
Email: kabinet@mpa.gov.me
Salutation: Dear Minister

Minister of Interior
Ivan Brajovic
Bulevar Svetog Petra Cetinjskog 6
81 000 Podgorica
Montenegro
Fax: +382 20 246 779
Email: kabinet@mup.gov.me
Salutation: Dear Minister

And copies to:
Mayor of Podgorica
Miomir Mugosa
Njegoseva 13
81 000 Podgorica
Montenegro
Email: pggradonacelnik@t-com.me

Also send copies to diplomatic representatives accredited to your country.

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

**AMNESTY
INTERNATIONAL**



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ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Konik 1 and 2 is the largest collective centre for displaced people in the Balkans. More than 1,500 Roma and Ashkali have lived there since they fled Kosovo in 1999, following human rights abuses perpetrated by Kosovo Albanians. Some 2,994 Roma and Ashkali from Kosovo remain in Montenegro. Only 54 Roma or Ashkali returned to Kosovo in 2011.

The fire destroyed 38 huts in the collective centre, which were home to around 150 families with around 800 members.

An Action Plan agreed with the European Commission in 2007, provides for durable solutions for Kosovo Roma and Ashkali, including plans to demolish camps at Konik and replace them with adequate housing for some 1,200 individuals. The first stage of the plan was to provide housing for those living at Konik camp I. Progress in implementing the plan has been very slow. Amnesty International is therefore concerned that with the slow progress being made on plans to provide permanent housing, the Roma and Ashkali refugees, made homeless by the recent fire, may need temporary accommodation for a year or more.

To date the affected population have not been consulted on the plans for housing, in accordance with international standards. NGOs and Roma have raised concerns that the plans may result in a segregated settlement. Further, the working group does not include any representatives of the affected population,

Documentation: in 2011, UNHCR estimated that some 1,600 Roma (predominantly those displaced from Kosovo) were at risk of statelessness. Under the Law on Foreigners, they may apply for temporary or permanent residency in Montenegro. However, personal documentation is required to obtain residency. Roma face many barriers in obtaining these documents, and those whose documents were destroyed in the fire at Konik will need additional assistance to get new documents.

Name: Over 800 Roma and Ashkali

Gender m/f: Both

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