

URGENT ACTION

ROMANI FAMILIES LEFT HOMELESS, OTHERS AT RISK

Around 600 Romani individuals fear destruction of their homes in the informal settlement of Germagnano in Turin, northern Italy. At least 7 families were left homeless after being forcibly evicted and their homes demolished. Municipal authorities have failed to carry out any consultation to identify adequate alternative housing for all families.

According to local authorities, **around 600 Roma**, including children, elderly, pregnant women, sick and disabled people, many originating from Romania and others refugees from former Yugoslavia, live in the long-standing informal settlement of Germagnano, in the city of Turin in northern Italy.

In September 2016, a judicially sanctioned decree ordered the seizure of the land where the settlement is based, on the grounds of illegal occupation and environmental hazard. The decree did not order the eviction of the families and local authorities claim that only those homes abandoned for at least seven days are being demolished. However, between 8 and 10 June, Amnesty International has documented at least seven cases of homes that were demolished while they were still inhabited by Roma residents, including pregnant women, new-born babies and elderly. These families were left homeless and had all of their belongings destroyed, including personal documents, baby clothes, medicines and other possessions. The families left homeless are either being hosted by friends and relatives, have moved to other locations in improvised shelters, or have returned to Romania. Many of the current residents told Amnesty International that they do not want to leave their homes even to go to the doctor, to buy food, or take their children to school, for fear of returning and finding their homes demolished.

Authorities never provided adequate notice to any of the families, nor did they carry out a genuine consultation to explore and identify adequate alternatives for the families, including appropriate accommodation. In a meeting with Amnesty International, the local authorities stated that the only alternative possible would be dormitories, however those would be available for a limited number of people and only to women and children.

Please write immediately in Italian or your own language:

- Calling on the authorities to ensure that all people left homeless in recent months as result of the forced eviction from Germagnano are urgently provided with adequate alternative accommodation based on genuine consultation;
- Urging them to commit to prevent any further forced evictions from Germagnano settlement and put in place a process to correctly identify possible abandoned homes in order to avoid rendering other individuals indiscriminately homeless;
- Calling on them to urgently initiate a genuine consultation with all residents of the Germagnano settlement to explore all alternative options to evictions.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS BEFORE 10 AUGUST 2017 TO:

Mayor of Turin

Chiara Appendino
Comune di Torino
Piazza Palazzo di Città, 1
10122, Torino, Italia
Fax: +39 011 011 30583
Email: segreteria.sindaca@comune.torino.it
Salutation: Dear Mayor

Prefect of Turin

Renato Saccone
Prefettura di Torino
Piazza Castello 205/199
10124, Torino, Italia
Fax: +39 011 55 89 904
Email: prefettura.torino@interno.it
Salutation: Dear Prefect

Also send copies to diplomatic representatives accredited to your country. HIS EXCELLENCY PASQUALE Q. TERRACCIANO, Embassy of Italy, 14 Three Kings' Yard Davies Street W1K 4EH, 020 7312 2200, Fax 020 7312 2230, Salutation: Your Excellency

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

**AMNESTY
INTERNATIONAL**



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ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

The informal settlement of Germagnano, in place since 2003, now hosts around 600 adults and children, all living in self-built housing made of wood and metal sheets or caravans. Dozens of families relocated here after being moved from other locations, including the authorized camp in Via dell'Arrivore and the informal settlement of Lungo stura Lazio, many after having been evicted in 2015. The Germagnano settlement is split into two main parts: one inhabited by Romanians – near the authorized camp in Germagnano created by local authorities in 2004 – the other, close to a rubbish tip, and inhabited by Romanians and Roma refugees from the former Yugoslavia.

The local authorities claim that only abandoned shacks in the settlement are being demolished. However, Amnesty International researchers have documented at least seven cases where families were rendered homeless after their homes were destroyed, including a heavily pregnant woman, a family with new born child and a sick man, among others. This occurred when individuals were away from home either at the doctor, buying food, visiting relatives or temporarily visiting their home countries.

In November 2016, one of the Germagnano residents submitted an appeal to court (*Tribunale del Riesame di Torino*) against the decree for seizure of the land. However, such a procedure does not have a suspensive effect and the case remains pending to date. The decree does not order the “eviction” of the residents, and official documents that accompany it instruct demolition of abandoned homes only. In practice however, Amnesty International documented that in at least seven cases, authorities demolished homes still inhabited by Roma, rendering the people homeless and creating an atmosphere of fear among the other residents. In April, some of the families from Germagnano settlement filed an application with the European Court of Human Rights alleging violations of the right to private, family life and a home together with a right to effective remedy, and this case is still pending.

Residents told Amnesty International that police forces come regularly into the settlement, always unannounced, and generally seize homes which at that precise moment do not have people inside, taping off the property and attaching a notice of seizure to the house. In some cases residents reported that seizure of homes occurred even in the presence of inhabitants.

In a meeting with Amnesty International on 9 June, the local councillor for social policies stated that authorities are not aware of any such situations of families rendered homeless following demolitions and that the only options available would be dormitories for women and children, and only for a limited number of people.

Amnesty International considers that the demolitions of houses of the families that were rendered homeless amount to forced evictions, which are prohibited under a range of international and regional human rights treaties which Italian authorities, at all levels, are bound by. Forced evictions are evictions carried out without adequate notice and genuine consultation with those affected, without legal safeguards and without provision of adequate alternative accommodation. The forced eviction of the families from Germagnano settlement is not unique. Amnesty International has repeatedly called on the European Commission to start an infringement proceeding against Italy under the Race Equality Directive for widespread and repeated discrimination of Roma in housing, including forced evictions and segregation in camps.