



11 August 2011

Mayor of Rome Gianni Alemanno  
Prefect of Rome Giuseppe Pecoraro  
City Councillor for Social Policy Sveva Belviso  
Delegate of the Mayor for Security Giorgio Ciardi

## RE: Evictions of Informal Romani Camps in Rome

Dear Mayor Alemanno, Prefect Pecoraro, Councillor Belviso, Delegate Ciardi,

The European Roma Rights Centre (ERRC)<sup>1</sup> and Association 21 luglio<sup>2</sup> are writing to express our deep concern about the continuing forced evictions of Romani communities which violate international law. According to the Mayor of Rome, between March and May 2011, 154 targeted evictions affecting 1,800 Roma.<sup>3</sup> Moreover, we are concerned that Rome officials have acknowledged a lack of awareness of international standards regulating forced evictions by which Italy is bound, including the requirement to provide prior notice, through their actions and statements.<sup>4</sup>

Since 2010, the ERRC and Association 21 luglio have documented evictions of informal Romani camps carried out by authorities in Rome, aiming to assess the legality of the evictions conducted.<sup>5</sup> Through this work, the organisations have established that Rome authorities consistently violate housing rights in the process of evicting Roma. Romani families living in informal camps who are forcibly evicted in Rome do not receive any official written notice in advance of the eviction. Housing and other personal property may be arbitrarily destroyed during the eviction. Alternative accommodation is not always offered to evicted Roma in need of such. When alternative accommodation is offered, it is only in the form of temporary shelter for women and children, resulting in family separation and the forced homelessness of some or all members of the affected families.<sup>6</sup>

On 10 May 2011, Association 21 luglio witnessed the forced eviction of 89 Romanian Roma living in the informal camp on via Salaria.<sup>7</sup> In the morning, police closed off the area and collected the identification documents of the inhabitants. In the absence of a court order authorising the eviction, all the shacks and tents were then demolished together with personal belongings inside the tents, including the property of Roma who were not home at the time. Temporary shelter was offered only to two mothers with babies. The affected Roma had moved to this informal camp after past evictions to be close to their families members who live in a

<sup>1</sup> The European Roma Rights Centre (ERRC) is an international public interest law organisation working to combat anti-Romani racism and human rights abuse of Roma through strategic litigation, research and policy development, advocacy and human rights education. The European Roma Right Centre has been monitoring the situation of Roma and Sinti in Italy since 1996. <http://www.errc.org>.

<sup>2</sup> Associazione 21 luglio is an organisation established to promote and defend the rights of children in general, and those of Romani children living in Italy in particular. The mission of the organisation is: safeguarding Romani children, fighting every form of discrimination, building critical awareness regarding the rights of Romani children, promoting campaigns and launching appeals to halt possible violations of Romani children's rights. See: <http://www.21luglio.com>.

<sup>3</sup> Gianni Alemanno, Mayor of Rome, *Il Blog di Alemanno 2.0*, 11 June 2011, available at:

<http://duepuntozero.alemanno.it/2011/06/10/nuova-identita-visiva-della-polizia-municipale.html>; "Proseguono gli sgomberi ma chi va a scuola non si tocca", *Il Messaggero*, 12 June 2011, available at: <http://194.177.96.73/cliente67/DatiWeb/PdfSingoli/83044.pdf>.

<sup>4</sup> Mayor Alemanno has admitted to not knowing the international law which provides for notification of any eviction. Amnesty International, *Sgombero forzato del campo "Casilino 700". Precisazione della Sezione Italiana di Amnesty International sulle dichiarazioni del sindaco di Roma. L'appello per un alloggio adeguato e risarcimenti alle famiglie sgomberate rimane valido*, 13 November 2009, available at: <http://www.amnesty.it/sgombero-casilino-700-precisazione-amnesty-italia.html>.

<sup>5</sup> Informal camps are small and precarious encampments where mostly Romanian Roma live and are subjected to repeated evictions. European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights, *The situation of Roma EU citizens moving to and settling in other EU member states*, November 2009, available at: [http://fra.europa.eu/fraWebsite/attachments/Roma\\_Movement\\_Comparative-final\\_en.pdf](http://fra.europa.eu/fraWebsite/attachments/Roma_Movement_Comparative-final_en.pdf).

<sup>6</sup> "Roma, Belviso, nomadi sgomberati rifiutano l'accoglienza di Roma Capitale", *Liberio News.it*, 6 July 2011, available at:

[http://www.liberonews.it/news/778343/Roma\\_Belviso\\_nomadi\\_sgomberati\\_rifiutano\\_l\\_accoglienza\\_di\\_Roma\\_Capitale.html](http://www.liberonews.it/news/778343/Roma_Belviso_nomadi_sgomberati_rifiutano_l_accoglienza_di_Roma_Capitale.html).

<sup>7</sup> According to Association 21 luglio out of 89 Roma living in Salaria informal settlement, there were 39 men, 18 women among which 5 pregnant at the time of eviction and 32 minors.

municipally-funded privately-run centre on via Salaria, where 350 Roma previously evicted from informal camps are temporarily accommodated in inadequate conditions.<sup>8</sup>

Six forced evictions of Romanian Roma that were independently documented by Association 21 luglio and ERRC and are highlighted in the following table.

Informal camp	Eviction Date	Total number of Roma evicted	Number of children	Children enrolled in school	Presence of eviction orders	Type of alternative solution offered
ex Miralanza	18 April	197	40	20	No	Shelter to women with babies
via Cluniacensi	22 April	166	60	20	No	Shelter to women with babies
via Candoni	9 May	158	100	0	No	Shelter to women with babies
via Salaria	10 May	89	32	0	No	Shelter offered to only two women with babies
via Cave di Pietralata	1 July	63	21	15	No	shelter to women with babies
via Candoni	8 August	50	15	15	No	Shelter to women with babies

Only in rare cases was some form of shelter offered to Romani families after evictions. The ERRC and Association 21 luglio have visited some of the shelters and found the living conditions of the families hosted to be inadequate. For example, following the 22 April 2011 eviction from the informal camp Casal Bruciato of Romanian Roma who sought refuge inside the Basilica of St Paolo,<sup>9</sup> in early June the ERRC visited the centre in via Torre Branca where the 107 affected Roma were hosted. For three months, these Romani families lived in one room with beds separated only by sheets. Children were forced to drop out of school because the shelter was very far from their schools.

The situation described raises serious concerns that authorities in Rome are failing to respect the right of Roma to adequate housing and protection from forced eviction, to private and family life and freedom from inhuman and/or degrading treatment and discrimination.

In particular, Italian authorities are bound by Article 3 (prohibition of torture), Article 8 (right to respect for private and family life) and Article 14 (prohibition of discrimination) of the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR); Article 1 of the First Protocol to the ECHR (protection of property); Article 16 of the Revised European Social Charter (the right of the family to social, legal and economic protection); Article 5b (the right to security of person and protection by the State against violence or bodily harm, whether inflicted by government officials or by any individual group or institution); and Article 6 (right to protection, remedies and adequate reparation or satisfaction for any damage suffered as a result of discrimination) of the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination; Article 11 of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (the right of everyone to an adequate standard of living for himself and his family, including adequate food, clothing and housing, and to the continuous improvement of living conditions); and Article 2 (freedom from discrimination of any kind), Article 16 (freedom from arbitrary or unlawful interference with individual privacy and family life) Article 27 (right to a standard of living adequate for the child's physical, mental, spiritual, moral and social development) and Article 37a (freedom from torture or other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment) of the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

The European Court of Human Rights in *Moldovan v. Romania* held that inadequate housing conditions for the Roma coupled with racial discrimination constituted degrading treatment.<sup>10</sup> Furthermore, in 2005<sup>11</sup> and 2010<sup>12</sup> the European Committee of Social Rights found Italy in violation of Article 31 (right to adequate housing) and Article E (freedom from discrimination) of the Revised European Social Charter for the practice of forcibly evicting Roma.

<sup>8</sup> For more information about the eviction of this informal camp and the centre of Via Salaria consult Association 21 luglio's report, *La Casa di Carta* (Rome: May 2011). Video footage about the Via Salaria Center is available at: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=x6duZg6cO7s>.

<sup>9</sup> S. Paolo: basilica chiude, protesta fedeli. Ai rom mille euro per tornare in Romania, *La Repubblica Roma.it*, 23 April 2011 available at [http://roma.repubblica.it/cronaca/2011/04/23/news/rom\\_notte\\_basilica-15288661/?ref=HREC1-9](http://roma.repubblica.it/cronaca/2011/04/23/news/rom_notte_basilica-15288661/?ref=HREC1-9).

<sup>10</sup> *Moldovan and Others v. Romania*, (No. 1): friendly settlement, available at: [www.errc.org/cms/upload/media/01/6B/m0000016B\\_doc](http://www.errc.org/cms/upload/media/01/6B/m0000016B_doc).

<sup>11</sup> European Committee of Social Rights, *ERRC v Italy: Complaint No 27/2004*, Decision on the Merits dated 21 December 2005, available at: [http://www.coe.int/t/dghl/monitoring/socialcharter/Complaints/Complaints\\_en.asp](http://www.coe.int/t/dghl/monitoring/socialcharter/Complaints/Complaints_en.asp).

<sup>12</sup> European Committee of Social Rights, *COHRE v Italy: Complaint No 58/2009*, Decision on the Merits dated 25 June 2010, available at: [http://www.coe.int/t/dghl/monitoring/socialcharter/Complaints/Complaints\\_en.asp](http://www.coe.int/t/dghl/monitoring/socialcharter/Complaints/Complaints_en.asp).

We are alarmed that despite the seriousness of the situation, the Municipality of Rome has maintained Roma in vulnerable conditions and has announced its intention to continue with the practice of evicting Roma.<sup>13</sup> The ERRC and Association 21 luglio request that Rome's authorities apply the following recommendations in order to comply with Italy's legal obligations:

- Refrain from conducting evictions of Roma without adequate notification and due process;
- Ensure that no Romani individual is made homeless in the process of eviction;
- Compensate Roma who have been evicted for personal property damaged or destroyed in prior eviction actions;
- Improve the conditions of Roma living in temporary shelters;
- Keep consulting Romani and Sinti organisations to develop sustainable, adequate integrated housing solutions for all Roma and Sinti on the territory of Rome; and
- Implement complex housing, employment, education and health projects to promote real inclusion of Roma in Rome.

We would welcome the opportunity to meet with your offices to discuss the above matters, and request to be informed of any actions undertaken by your offices.

Sincerely,

Robert Kushen  
Executive Director  
European Roma Rights Centre

Carlo Stasolla  
President  
Association 21 luglio

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<sup>13</sup> "Roma: Alemanno, continueremo con piano sgomberi campi Rom per garantire sicurezza", *Adnkronos*, 15 June 2011, available at: [http://www.adnkronos.com/IGN/News/Cronaca/Roma-Alemanno-continueremo-con-piano-sgomber-campi-Rom-per-garantire-sicurezza\\_312133253790.html](http://www.adnkronos.com/IGN/News/Cronaca/Roma-Alemanno-continueremo-con-piano-sgomber-campi-Rom-per-garantire-sicurezza_312133253790.html).

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CC:

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President of the European Parliament, Jerzy Buzek  
MEP, Livia Járóka  
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