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) 1 and Association 21 luglio 2 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. 3 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. 4

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. 5 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. 6

On 10 May 2011, Association 21 luglio witnessed the forced eviction of 89 Romanian Roma living in the informal camp on via Salaria. 7 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

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1 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.

2 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.


7 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.\(^8\)

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

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

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,\(^9\) 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.\(^10\) Furthermore, in 2005\(^11\) and 2010\(^12\) 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.

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\(^8\) 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.


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. 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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TO:
Mayor of Rome Gianni Alemanno
Gabinetto Sindaco
Piazza Del Campidoglio, 1
00186 Roma, Italy
Fax: +39 06 67102175

Prefect of Rome Giuseppe Pecoraro
Prefettura di Roma - Ufficio Territoriale del Governo
via IV Novembre, 119/A
00187 Roma, Italy
Fax: +39 06 6729 4555

City Councillor for Social Policy Sveva Belviso
Comune di Roma
Via Viale Manzoni, 16
00185 Roma, Italy
Fax: +39 06 70454112

Delegate of the Mayor for Security Giorgio Ciardi
Councillor Delegate for Security Policies
via della Greca 5
Rome 00186, Italy
Fax: +39 6 67102746

CC:
European Commissioner for Justice, Fundamental Rights and Citizenship, Viviane Reding
European Commissioner for Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion, László Andor
Head of the Roma Taskforce and European Commission Director-General for Justice, Françoise Le Bail
President of the European Parliament, Jerzy Buzek
MEP, Lívia Járóka
MEP, Kinga Göncz
MEP, Renate Weber
Council of Europe Secretary General, Thorbjørn Jagland
Council of Europe Commissioner for Human Rights, Thomas Hammarberg
Special representative for Roma Issues to the Secretary General of the Council of Europe, Jeroen Schokkenbroek
OSCE High Commissioner on National Minorities, Knut Vollebaek
OSCE/ODIHR Senior Advisor on Roma and Sinti Issues, Andrzej Mirga
European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights Director, Morten Kjærum
European Commission against Racism and Intolerance Chair, Nils Muiznieks
European Committee of Social Rights President, Luis Jimena Quesada