

URGENT ACTION

FORCED EVICTION OF HALANDRI ROMA IMMINENT

Despite an injunction by the United Nations Human Rights Committee (UNHRC), around 74 Roma families living in a settlement in Halandri, Athens, Greece are at risk of imminent forced eviction.

74 Roma families living in a settlement in Halandri, a neighbourhood in Greater Athens, Greece, are at imminent risk of being forcibly evicted from their homes on 25 February. The families have lived in the area since the late 1970s and many of the children go to local schools. The decision to demolish the Roma homes was taken by the Secretary General of the Decentralized Administration of Attika on 8 November 2013, despite the UNHRC issuing an injunction (interim measures). The May 2013 injunction to the Greek authorities requested that they take measures to prevent the Roma families from becoming homeless, while a communication on violations of the housing rights of the community is examined by the Committee. The injunction was reaffirmed by the UNHRC in August 2013 and February 2014. According to the NGO Greek Helsinki Monitor (GHM), who provide legal assistance to Roma families, the decision to evict the families was kept secret for two months and was served to the Roma on 10 January 2014.

On 8 November 2013 the Secretary General of the Decentralized Administration of Attika decided to relocate the Roma families from Halandri to an old Nato American Radar base on top of Patera Mountain, near the town of Megara. According to GHM and the Halandri Roma this decision was taken without any consultation with the community and/or the Greek Ombudsperson. The Roma object to the relocation as it is in a remote area and it would be difficult for them to access schools and health services. In addition they are registered residents of the municipality of Halandri and entitled under Greek legislation to be housed in Halandri.

Please write immediately in English, Greek or your own language calling on the authorities to:

- Immediately halt evictions in Halandri, and put in place safeguards as required under international human rights standards, following identification and serious consideration of all feasible alternatives;
- Ensure that no one is left homeless and vulnerable to other violations of their human rights as a result of the eviction;
- Ensure that any alternative housing is provided after genuine consultation with the affected community and that it complies with international human rights criteria on adequacy of housing.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS BEFORE 4 APRIL 2014 TO:

Secretary General of Decentralized

Administration in Attika

Mihail Angelakas

Katehaki 56

11525 Athens, Greece

Fax: 00 30 213 203 5700

Email: ggattiki@otenet.gr

Salutation: Dear Sir

Minister of Interior

Giannis Mihelakis

Stadiou 27

10183 Athens, Greece

Fax: 0030 213 1364130

Email: info@ypes.gr

Salutation: Dear Minister

And copies to:

Minister of Justice, Transparency and
Human Rights

Charalambos Athanasiou

Mesogheion Avenue 96

11527 Athens, Greece

Email: Grammateia@justice.gov.gr

Also send copies to diplomatic representatives accredited to your country. Please insert local diplomatic addresses below:

Name Address 1 Address 2 Address 3 Fax Fax number Email Email address Salutation Salutation

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

AMNESTY
INTERNATIONAL



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ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

The UN Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights has emphasized that even when an eviction is considered to be justified, it should be carried out in strict compliance with international human rights law and should only take place when appropriate safeguards are in place. These include genuine consultation with affected communities, provision of adequate notice, provision of legal remedies and legal aid.

Nobody should be left homeless as a result of an eviction and the authorities should provide adequate alternative housing for those who cannot provide for themselves. Any resettlement provided must comply with international human rights standards on adequacy of housing. Unless these safeguards observed, the eviction will violate the right to adequate housing and would amount to a breach of Greece's international human rights commitments.

GHM has been informed that the authorities used the so called "nomad" provision (a provision in Greek legislation regarding the housing of nomad populations) in their decision to relocate the Roma community, despite the fact the Halandri Roma community are not nomadic and are in fact registered residents of the municipality of Halandri and entitled to housing in the area. The national press were informed that the authorities were determined to proceed with the relocation of the Halandri Roma even though the municipalities in Megara and the adjacent town of Mandra have objected. The municipalities have challenged in court the decision of the Secretary General of the Decentralized Administration to relocate the Halandri Roma to their area.

This is not the first time that the Halandri Roma have been threatened with forced eviction. The Secretary General of the Decentralized Administration of Attika issued a decision in February 2013 for the demolition of the Roma dwellings in May 2013 and planned to relocate the Roma community to an adjacent plot of land at an unspecified date. On that occasion, the authorities reportedly consulted with the Roma families and the Greek Ombudsperson in regard to the relocation site. Following a communication by the Roma community to the UNHRC seeking an injunction against their forced eviction, interim measures were issued in May 2013 and maintained in August 2013 and February 2014. The relocation of the Roma community to the adjacent plot was cancelled following fierce anti-Romani reaction by people living around the relocation site. Other attempts to evict the Roma community took place in 1999 and 2012.

GHM informed Amnesty International that the enforcement decisions issued by the Department of Town Planning and served to the Roma in all three attempts to evict them (September 2012 and February 2013 and November 2013) were effectively abusive as they were based on outdated demolition decisions from 1996 that did not include all the Roma dwellings. The authorities conducted and updated registration of the dwellings in the settlement in January 2014 during police raid. GHM points out that the demolition decisions based on that registration can only be effectively executed when they become final. To date they have not been served. After they are served, the Roma will file appeals within 30 days and any eviction should be suspended. After appeals are reviewed final demolition decisions can be issued.

Name: 74 Roma families in Halandri, Athens

Gender m/f: both

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