



28 October 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

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

The European Roma Rights Centre¹ and Popica ONLUS² are writing to express deep concern about the ongoing evictions and ill treatment of Romani communities in Rome in recent months.

On 11 August 2011, the ERRC and Association 21 luglio sent a letter to Rome authorities expressing concern about the continuing forced evictions of Romani communities.³ Since then, 18 more evictions have been documented by the ERRC and local organisations. The majority of the evicted families have been living in Rome for many years, have been subjected to multiple evictions and are presently living on the streets, as no alternative accommodation was provided by the municipality. Many children were prevented from attending school as a consequence of the eviction. For example:

- On 29 September, almost 200 Romanian Roma were evicted from the settlement of via Salaria;⁴
- On 8 October, four evictions were carried out in the same day, affecting about 231 Roma living in informal settlements in the district of Statuario-Capannelle and in a building owned by the Municipality in via Castrense;⁵
- On 17 October, 22 Romani adults and 12 Romani children were evicted in the settlement of via Palaia;⁶ and
- On 18 October, 15 Roma were evicted from a private building called via Pierantoni.⁷

The ERRC and Popica ONLUS are deeply concerned about the fact that families are evicted without written notification in advance or consideration of the personal situations of those affected. Moreover only temporary solutions are offered to the families, such as shelter only for women and children or assisted returns for citizens of other EU states. During the evictions, the residents' personal belongings are often destroyed. On 11 September, ERRC staff met some of the families who were evicted from tents, which had been cut and destroyed three times during one week. These families reported that racist remarks were made by a police officer during the evictions. Moreover families explained that they are afraid to walk together around the city as they have been targeted and followed by the police.

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 Popica ONLUS is an organisation established to fight racism, dealing especially with issues relating children from Eastern Europe in Italy and abroad. One of the main programmes of the organisation addresses problems related to street children in Romania. <http://www.popica.org/>.

³ ERRC and Association 21 Luglio, Evictions of Informal Camps in Rome, 08 August 2011, available at: <http://www.errc.org/cms/upload/file/italy-evictions-of-informal-romani-camps-in-rome-11-august-2011.pdf>.

⁴ Popica ONLUS, Comunicato del 30/09/2011 sullo sgombero dell'insediamento di via Salaria, 30/09/2011, available at: http://www.popica.org/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=133:comunicato-&catid=2:comunicati&Itemid=2.

⁵ Statuario-Capannelle, sgomberati tre campi nomadi, 8/10/2011 available at <http://tuscolano.romatoday.it/sgombero-nomadi-capannelle.html>; Roma, sgomberati 31 Rom con 13 bambini. E' dramma umanitario, 8 October 2011, available at: http://www.everyonegroup.com/it/EveryOne/MainPage/Entries/2011/10/8_Roma_sgomberati_31_Rom_con_13_bambini_E_dramma_umanitario.html

⁶ Roma: Santori, Sgomberato Campo Nomadi Abusivo Nella Valle Dei Casali, 17 October 2011, available at: http://www.asca.it/regioni-ROMA_SANTORI_SGOMBERATO_CAMPO_NOMADI_ABUSIVO_NELLA_VALLE_DEI_CASALI-643234-lazio-8.html.

⁷ Rome: Santori (Pdl), nomads evicted again in Mira Lanza area, 18 October 2011, available at http://www.asca.it/regioni-ROMA_SANTORI_SGOMBERATO_CAMPO_NOMADI_ABUSIVO_NELLA_VALLE_DEI_CASALI-643234-lazio-8.html.

According to Popica Onlus, a local Romani organisation that has been monitoring evictions, many complaints were made to the authorities regarding the vulnerability of the families to repeated evictions. The Municipality has started to consider admitting some of the evicted families whose children are enrolled in school into shelters. However evictions often prevent children from being enrolled in school, and leave pregnant women and the elderly in increasingly vulnerable situations.

As noted in our 11 August letter, numerous violations of fundamental human rights arise during the process of forced evictions of Roma. The authorities in Rome continue to ignore the right of Roma to adequate housing and protection from forced eviction, the right to protection of private and family life and the freedom from inhuman and/or degrading treatment. Moreover, these evictions are discriminatory, in violation of the international law.⁸

The ERRC and Popica ONLUS are concerned about reports indicating that further evictions will take place in Rome and urgently call on you to implement the following recommendations:

- Immediately provide shelter, particularly to the families who have children enrolled in school, and ensure that adequate alternative accommodation is provided with the ultimate aim of identifying permanent and adequate housing within the municipality to all evictees;
- Refrain from conducting evictions of Roma without adequate notification and due process;
- Provide an opportunity for genuine consultation with those affected;
- Ensure that the individuals affected be given compensation for lost property and other damage associated with the forced eviction and destruction of property;
- Ensure that no Romani individual is made homeless in the process of eviction;
- Ensure effective investigation of allegations of police abuse during the evictions;
- Consult Romani and Sinti organisations in order 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 request to be informed of any actions undertaken by your offices.

Yours faithfully,

Dezideriu Gergely
Executive Director
European Roma Rights Centre

Donato Padalino
President
Popica Onlus

⁸ ERRC, Letter, 11 August 2011, available at: <http://errc.org/cms/upload/file/italy-evictions-of-informal-romani-camps-in-rome-11-august-2011.pdf>.

TO:

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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, Livia 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