

URGENT ACTION

11 ROMA FAMILIES FACE FORCED EVICTION

At least 11 Roma families face forced eviction from their homes on a landfill site on the island of Lefkada in Greece, and have been subjected to other violations of their rights to adequate housing and health. The families have lived on the site with no access to electricity, sewerage and water connections for the past three years, following their forced eviction from another site close to Lefkada city, the capital of the island.

At least 11 families, including many children, face forced eviction as the Lefkada authorities have decided to redevelop the landfill site. There has been no consultation with the Roma community, who were reportedly only informed orally by the local authorities around three weeks ago that they should move. However, they have not been given any official offer of adequate alternative accommodation. There was reportedly only an unofficial offer for the families to move to pre-fabricated houses closer to the landfill site, which the community do not consider adequate.

The redevelopment of the landfill site began a few days later, and the construction company hired by the local authorities are dumping waste into the settlement where the Roma families were living. Living conditions there are now unbearable due to the terrible smell emanating from the garbage dumped next to their homes and the presence of rats and flies. Fearing for their health and that of their children, most of the families have to abandon their homes for many hours of the day and they are currently sleeping in their cars in a car park close to the site.

PLEASE WRITE in Greek or your own language calling on the Mayor and Council of Lefkada to:

- ✓ immediately stop the construction company from dumping waste into the settlement, to clean up the area and to guarantee the right to an effective remedy and reparations, including compensation, to the affected families;
- ✓ to halt any attempts to forcibly evict the community and instead to hold a genuine consultation with the Roma community to explore all feasible alternatives to evictions;
- ✓ remind them that forced evictions are prohibited under international and regional human rights treaties, that Greece is a party to, that evictions should only be undertaken as a last resort and only after all necessary legal and procedural safeguards are in place, including genuine consultation, prior adequate notice, access to legal remedies, provision of adequate alternative accommodation and compensation for all losses;
- ✓ provide emergency relief including food, water, temporary adequate alternative accommodation and access to medical assistance to the affected families as necessary;
- ✓ in consultation with the community, develop a plan to provide adequate alternative accommodation, to all those affected, which complies with international human rights standards on housing including ensuring that houses are not located next to pollution sources which threaten the right to health of the inhabitants, and with access to safe drinking water, electricity, sewage connections and other essential infrastructure.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS BEFORE 18 SEPTEMBER 2009 TO:

Vassileios Fetsis
Mayor of Lefkada
Town Hall
Angelou Sikelianou and N. Svoronou
31100 Lefkada
Greece

Fax: + 30 26450 23353

Email: info@dimoslefkadas.gr

Salutation: Dear Mayor

Prokopis Pavlopoulos
Minister of Interior
Ministry of Interior
Vas. Sofias 15
10674 Athens
Greece
Fax: + 30 210 69297 64
Email: ypourgospes@ypesdda.gov.gr
Salutation: Dear Minister

AND COPIES TO:

Konstandinos Aravanis
Prefect
Prefecture of Lefkada
I. Mela 3
31100 Lefkada/Greece
Fax: + 30 26453 60720
Email: nomarxis@lefkada.gr
Salutation: Dear Prefect

Also send copies to diplomatic representatives of Greece accredited to your country. Please check with your section office if sending appeals after the above date.

**AMNESTY
INTERNATIONAL**



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ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

The Roma community who have been living in Lefkada for many years had moved to the current settlement next to the landfill site three years ago. They had lived for several years in another site at the edges of the capital of Lefkada but they were forced to move three years ago because the authorities wanted to construct a building for the local administration there. The community was reportedly not consulted prior to the construction operation, were not offered any compensation for the destruction of their homes and the only alternative accommodation on offer was a plot of land next to the landfill site. Following their move to the later site, the authorities did not permit them to establish electricity, water and sewage connections and the only facilities allowed were one tap and two toilets which have never been repaired. Furthermore, the authorities reportedly continued to dispose of tons of waste and garbage at the landfill site despite the existence of the settlement next to it.

Local authorities in Greece have conducted a series of forced evictions of a large number of Roma families in the past decade all over Greece. These include the evictions of Roma families from Maroussi and Aspropyrgos in the run-up to the 2004 Olympic Games, and from the area of Votanikos where the City of Athens had announced the construction of a football stadium. On 8 December 2004, the European Committee of Social Rights found that the insufficiency of permanent dwellings and the lack of stopping facilities for Roma communities as well as the forced evictions of Roma constituted a violation of Article 16 of the European Social Charter with regards to a complaint lodged by an NGO, the European Roma Rights Centre against Greece. On 23 September 2008, the European Committee of Social Rights declared admissible a complaint against Greece lodged by two NGOs, INTERIGHTS and the Greek Helsinki Monitor, alleging that the Greek authorities were continuing the forced evictions of Roma without providing suitable alternative accommodation and that the Roma continue to suffer discrimination in Greece in their access to housing.

A video clip which depicts the squalid living conditions of the Roma families can be viewed at http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=w2AwS9dcJ_g (please note that this video has been recorded by private individuals and is not Amnesty International material)

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