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Romania: Thousands of lives uprooted in forced evictions

The Romanian authorities betray thousands of their citizens through broken promises and total disregard of their right to adequate housing, Amnesty International said in a new report published today on forced evictions in the country.

[Pushed to the margins: Five stories of Roma forced evictions in Romania](#) presents the experiences of people pushed out from their homes, out of their neighbourhoods and communities at the peripheries of their cities.

The report follows the journeys of five people from three Romanian cities after they have been forcibly evicted from their homes and their resistance to relocation. It exposes the profound impact on people's lives of lost homes and livelihoods, disconnection from social circles, stigma, difficulties in accessing education or health care and the trauma of eviction itself.

“What we see in 21st century Romania is the deliberate expulsion from the society of vulnerable people who live below or on the poverty line and suffer from inadequate housing conditions. The current housing legislation in Romania falls far short of the international standards adopted by the Romanian government. In particular, it fails to ensure the right to adequate housing for all its citizens and to prohibit forced evictions,” said Barbora Černušáková, Amnesty International's expert on Romania.

“Legislative flaws allow local authorities to sweep away long-established Romani communities entirely and relocate them to inadequate housing, out of sight of the rest of the population, under the pretext of ‘inner-city regeneration’ and ‘development’. Such relocations often result in further marginalization and poverty and go against the government's policies to combat social exclusion of Roma and other vulnerable groups.”

Claudia Greta, now in her late twenties, lived in Coastei Street in the western Romanian city of Cluj-Napoca since she was nine – until 2010, when the city authorities forcibly evicted the entire neighbourhood. The residents were relocated to Pata Rât, an area on the outskirts of the city, known for its landfill and former chemical waste dump. A number of families were not provided with any alternative housing at all.

In Claudia's case this meant that for five months she had to share the small room allocated to her family with her parents and brother's family – all 11 of them – because they were left homeless. “They threw us close to garbage as if we are garbage as well... They [people in Cluj] don't know ... where and how we live; that we stay in one room, we wash ourselves here, we eat here, we do our homework here, we do everything here,” said Claudia.

Rodica was one of around 500 people who resisted eviction from Craica, a settlement in the north-western city of Baia Mare in 2012. The municipality forcibly evicted half of the settlement and demolished their homes, resettling them at the edge of the city into buildings belonging to a former metallurgical factory, CUPROM.

After the announcement of the upcoming demolitions in Craica, Rodica went to see the alternative housing in CUPROM for herself: “There were some iron wardrobes with a lot of jars... marked with a ‘danger’ sign. I opened [one] and my eyes and mouth were burning, I couldn't breathe. They were full of chemicals... That is why I [called it] the camp of death.”

Families relocated to CUPROM were given either one or two rooms with no heating and poor insulation. Sanitation facilities were shared among the residents of each floor. The buildings were not converted for residential purposes and one of them – a former chemical processing laboratory – still stored chemical substances.

Dusia has been evicted three times over the course of her life. The last time was in August 2012, when the local authorities in the north-eastern city of Piatra Neamț forcibly evicted some 500 Roma from housing units in Muncii Street - relocating them to inadequate ‘social housing’ in Văleni 2, an isolated area about 7km away from the city centre, separated from it by a de-industrialized zone and a river. Now she has to walk about 1km along a muddy, unlit road to reach the nearest bus stop.

“If you were in our place,” Dusia asks, “[wouldn’t you want] at least electricity, a road, a bus and a grocery store to buy bread? Wouldn't you feel better to see a bit more light when you go outside [at night]? There are risks. The forest is close, there are bears, wolves.”

“The stories of Claudia, Rodica and Dusia – their insecurity, deprivation and hopelessness – are painfully familiar for many of the 2 million Roma in Romania,” said Barbora Černušáková.

“The actions, or in some cases the lack of action, of local authorities, and their broken promises are illustrative of the discrimination against the Roma and have resulted in segregation on a wide scale.”

Pata Rât in Cluj-Napoca is known as the Roma ghetto of the city. In 2012 the local authorities announced an intention to start relocating the inhabitants that had been moved there after a forced eviction. As of June 2013, there are still no detailed plans and people evicted from Coastei Street are still waiting for justice.

Catalin Chereches, the mayor of Baia Mare won the 2012 local election with the pledge to demolish Romani settlements in the city. Half of the biggest settlement of Craica was demolished and its residents were relocated to inadequate conditions. They, as well as those people who resisted the eviction, continue living in fear that they may leave their homes from one day to another.

In October 2001, the mayor of Piatra-Neamț announced his intention to create a Roma ghetto on a former chicken farm. Now, some 12 years later, the local authority “achieved” its aim and pushed all the poor Roma out of Piatra-Neamț, to the outskirts of the city.

“Such actions by local authorities are unlawful and unacceptable. They shatter people’s lives and render Roma-inclusion policies pointless. The Romanian government must act urgently to end these violations. It must bring its authority to bear on local officials to protect, respect and fulfil the housing rights of all people and put an end to forced evictions,” Barbora Černušáková said.