

Herman Van Rompuy

President of the European Council

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**AMNESTY
INTERNATIONAL**



European Institutions Office

Dear Mr Van Rompuy,

EU MUST TAKE STAND ON RIGHTS OF ROMA FAMILIES IN CLUJ-NAPOCA, ROMANIA

Your meeting with Mihai-Răzvan Ungureanu, the Romanian Prime Minister, in Brussels on 15 March, offers a crucial opportunity to put human rights at the forefront of your mandate as President of the European Council.

To ensure inclusive growth in the region and meet the objectives laid down in the Europe 2020 Strategy, the EU must give the highest priority to combating and preventing discrimination and social exclusion, especially against Romani communities. Indeed, Roma have lower incomes, worse health, poorer housing, lower literacy and higher unemployment than the rest of the population, as also acknowledged by the EU Framework for National Roma Integration Strategies which prioritises access to housing.

We are therefore deeply concerned about the situation of the former Coastei Street Romani community in Cluj-Napoca. On 17 December 2010, 76 families, the majority Roma, were forcibly evicted by local authorities from the centre of that city. The eviction completely disregarded international human rights obligations which clearly provide for, *inter alia*, due procedure, meaningful consultation with the concerned community, advance notice and relocation to adequate alternative housing. Moreover, as a result of the eviction, several families remain homeless.

In Cluj-Napoca there was no consultation with those affected and no feasible alternatives to eviction were explored. Those evicted were not given any written or detailed notification. They were told about the eviction two days before it happened, and had no opportunity to challenge it. The alternative housing provided to some families is on the city outskirts, close to a landfill and a former chemical waste dump. Homes are overcrowded and residents do not have adequate access to jobs, schools and healthcare. Despite the human rights violations they have experienced, to date, no effective remedy has been found to improve their situation.

This case should be a warning to the Romanian authorities to strengthen housing laws to ensure they comply with international human rights standards. We therefore ask you to urge the Romanian Prime Minister to prioritise in his government's agenda the amendment of national housing law to ensure it includes the necessary protection and safeguards for the right to adequate housing. Such a change is essential to preventing any repetition of cases like that in Cluj-Napoca.

We should naturally be happy to provide any further information you might require.

Yours sincerely,

Dr Nicolas J Beger

Director

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