

Štefan Füle
Commissioner for Enlargement and
European Neighbourhood Policy
European Commission

**AMNESTY
INTERNATIONAL**



European Institutions Office

Brussels, 25 April 2012

Our Ref: B 1196

Dear Commissioner Füle,

**EC MUST BE UNEQUIVOCAL ON UNLAWFULNESS OF TOMORROW'S FORCED EVICTIONS IN
BELGRADE**

On Friday 20 April Amnesty International asked you to call on the city of Belgrade not to carry out evictions of Roma settlements planned for this week until internationally-required procedures had been followed.

The forced eviction of more than 1,000 Roma from the same settlement at Belvil will take place tomorrow morning, Thursday 26 April.

We urge the Commission urgently and immediately to call on the Belgrade city authorities to postpone this eviction until a proper process of consultation with Belvil residents has taken place, in accordance with international human rights standards. The Commission must be unequivocal in its engagement with the city authorities that if the eviction proceeds tomorrow, it will be a forced eviction which violates international and regional standards to which Serbia is party.

We consider that the measures by means of which this eviction has been organised fail to meet international standards on the conduct of lawful evictions. These include that need for evictions only to take place where and when they are absolutely necessary, following appropriate consultations and that affected people have been served with adequate and reasonable prior notice, and been granted access to legal remedies to challenge the eviction. But in this case, the affected residents have not been told the reason for the eviction, nor have any other of the mentioned requirements been met. Until yesterday, it had been announced that only 40 families would be evicted on Thursday. Yesterday the city authorities told more than 200 additional families that they will also be forcibly evicted.

On Tuesday, at a short meeting with the affected Roma, the city authorities told them that they will be taken to segregated settlements consisting of metal containers around Belgrade. They received no other information and were merely given a slip of paper stating where they would be taken. Others, who asked that they might instead receive funding to build their own property on land they already own, were denied this option, and told they had no choice but to be moved to containers, or otherwise be homeless.

We are also concerned that Roma from municipalities outside Belgrade will be transported back to their municipalities of origin. We have monitored the similar removal of families to southern Serbia, from the Gazela settlement, in 2009, where many families were rendered homeless or were required to live in grossly inadequate housing for up to a year before they received any help in making their homes

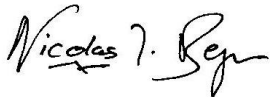
habitable. On this basis and considering the speed at which tomorrow's evictions have been organised, it seems unlikely that affected families will be given any assistance by their municipality and may again be rendered homeless.

While we welcome the Commission's intention to ensure that Roma from Belvil are ultimately guaranteed the right to adequate housing, in the form of pre-fabricated houses, funded and built by the Commission, the latter must unequivocally insist that any such financial support is contingent on the city's complying with international safeguards. There must be no mixed messages which imply that the Commission condones the Belgrade city authorities' blatantly flawed process in carrying out this eviction.

We consider it unnecessary for these communities to be evicted this week, where no adequate housing is available. We urge the Commission to collaborate with the city, and local NGOs working with affected Roma, and particularly with the affected communities, to find a solution which fully respects the right to adequate housing and a durable solution for all inhabitants.

Yours sincerely,

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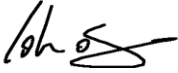
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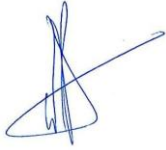
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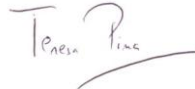
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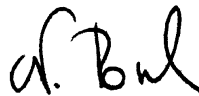
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