



**Roma evictions: the
European Union is not
respecting its commitments
to human rights!**

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During summer 2012, various governments of the European Union evicted Roma from their houses. Some states also evicted this population from their land. The European Association for the defense of Human Rights (AEDH) calls on the States to stop these evictions and their stigmatization policy towards the Roma people.

The European Association for the defense of Human Rights (AEDH) denounces the violence against Roma people of various Member States of the European Union who took advantage of the summer to expel them from their precarious houses. Roma were left on the street in Italy and in France, after the authorities destroyed their settlements without offering them alternative housing. Migrant Roma from the Balkans and Eastern Europe who came to Italy in hope of a better life were abandoned on the street after being evicted from their camps in Rome and Milan. In France, around 2,000 Roma from Romania and Bulgaria were expelled from their houses this summer, and some of them were evicted from the country; as well as in Greece, where 400 Roma from Albania were sent back to their country. Meanwhile, in Sofia, Bulgaria, some 200 Roma families won their case at the European Court of Human Rights against the attempts of the municipality to evict them, but in July, the mayor presented a new program to return hundreds of Roma families to their native places. Last April in Serbia, 250 Roma families were expelled from Belgrade's Belvil settlement. The States denied the right to housing to all these people. As a matter of fact, an eviction is not possible – in theory – unless it is the last resort, and only after a court decision authorized it and when a relocation solution was found for the people evicted from their accommodation.

In the Czech Republic, Roma families living in Ostrava are threatened with eviction from their home because the building where they live is considered to be insanitary; but it is the local authority that refuses to maintain and clean the sewerage system of the building. As for its neighbors – Slovakia, Romania, Bulgaria, Hungary – the Czech Republic continues to discriminate against the Roma minority living on its territory, who have become the scapegoat for the current economic crisis. However, the Roma are the first victims of this crisis. That is why they emigrate to Western Europe, hoping to find better living conditions. Yet they are welcomed by racism and discrimination, and are forced to live in slums and beg to survive.

AEDH regrets that the European funds intended for Roma inclusion are not used by national governments. It also deplores the lack of consultation and help between the national governments to face this situation. The request made by the French government to the Romanian and Bulgarian authorities is an example of that. According to the French government, the responsibility to find solutions to improve the Roma condition relies on Romania and Bulgaria, to prevent them from migrating to France; and France does not consider it to be its responsibility to treat them with dignity when they are on its territory.

Regarding the situation, international bodies react weakly, and these reactions barely have any effect: the United Nations condemned the massive evictions of Roma in France, stressing the fact that collective evictions from a national land to another country are forbidden under international law. The European Commission also placed France under surveillance after the Roma evictions in the summer of 2012. But no punishment was imposed on France to stop these evictions. Moreover, the other Member States that hold the same policy concerning the Roma (Italy, Greece, Germany...) are not publically criticized. The European Commission refuses to see that anti-Roma feeling is deeply rooted in all the countries of the European Union.

AEDH considers that it is not possible to work toward the inclusion of a population in a society without first fighting the discrimination and racism this population faces. That is why AEDH has various demands:

- AEDH asks, through its member leagues, the Member States to stop the evictions of Roma from their houses, as well as to stop the evictions of Roma from the land of some States.
- AEDH calls the States to protect the rights of the Roma.
- AEDH calls on the European Commission to put pressure on the Member States to implement policies to fight anti-Roma racism, in order to implement efficiently and in a sustainable way the “National Strategies for the Inclusion of the Roma” presented by the Member States to the European Commission.

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The European Association for the Defence of Human Rights (Association Européenne pour la défense des Droits de l’Homme - AEDH) consists of associations and leagues defending human rights in the countries of the European Union. AEDH is an associate member of the International Federation of Human Rights (Fédération internationale pour la défense des droits de l’Homme - FIDH). For more information, visit www.aedh.eu.