



IDEA ROM ONLUS

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Dear Excellencies,

The European Roma Rights Centre (ERRC)¹ and Idea Rom Onlus² are writing to express our grave concern about the situation in your city, where Roma are being moved into physically segregated, Roma-only housing provided by the municipality, contrary to the prohibition on race discrimination in housing set out in EU and Italian non-discrimination law. Your practice of residential segregation has been highlighted by recent events: close to 100 Roma were evicted from Lungo Stura Lazio settlement where some of them had been living for more than ten years and they were not provided alternative housing. As a consequence they were left homeless, and another 500 Roma from this settlement now risk facing the same fate. The eviction did not follow any notion of due process: only some of those evicted were notified short time in advance and only verbally.

We are in particular concerned by the fact that according to the local organisation Idea Rom Onlus, Roma are being moved to racially segregated housing provided by your city. This is

¹ The ERRC is an international public interest law organisation engaging in a range of activities aimed at combating antiRomani racism and human rights abuse of Roma. The approach of the ERRC involves, in particular, strategic litigation, international advocacy, research and policy development, and training of Romani activists. More information are available at: www.errc.org.

² Idea Rom Onlus (Idea Rom) is a Romani women's NGO working in Turin in districts with the biggest settlements of Romani families. In 2010 the association was awarded a Plaque of Honour by the President of the Republic of Italy for its work in promoting social integration of Romani communities. The association is made up of women belonging to different communities, some with professional experience in cultural mediation, needs assessment and project planning and implementation. Idea Rom promotes Romani direct representation. Idea Rom supports educational success, women's entrepreneurship and job placement, access to integrated housing and cultural promotion. More information are available at: www.idearom.it.

happening despite the fact that the project La Città Possibile³ following the city plan of Turin⁴ – approved on 23 April 2013 – foresees inclusion paths for around 1,300 Roma living in formal and informal camps including those living in the Lungo Stura Lazio which are now left homeless. These inclusion paths are supposed to involve moving Roma into integrated housing and ensuring they have employment opportunities. However, according to information provided by local organisations on the Lungo Stura Lazio informal camps, the city has spent most of the funds available for the plan, yet has only provided access to adequate housing for around 15 families and segregated, “temporary” flats for about 50 others⁵.

We are also disturbed by some provisions of this city plan which appear contrary to the prohibition on discrimination. The criteria for selecting beneficiaries are opaque and vague and leave out a large number of people who most probably will be evicted without being offered any adequate housing solution. Moreover, the project La Città Possibile provides that 200 of the 1300 Roma are to be placed in so-called “formal camps”, that is, racially segregated housing facilities only for Roma. Moving people into racially segregated camps violates Italy’s domestic and international, including its EU-law, obligations. This appears to be nothing more than the continuation of the policies and measures initiated under the “nomad” State of Emergency (SoE) declared in 2008, despite that it and the related implementing ordinances were annulled by the Supreme Court of Cassation on 26 March 2013. Additionally, the plan involves continuing to process sensitive personal data contrary to EU Directive 94/46⁶.

The ERRC and Idea Rom Onlus consider the segregated housing of Roma and the continuation of SoE measures already been deemed illegal to amount to violations of your obligations under – inter alia – the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination, which prescribes the elimination and prohibition of racial discrimination regarding the right to housing (art. 5. d. iii.). You are also failing to abide by the obligation, under EU Directive 2000/43, to refrain from race discrimination in the area of housing (see art. 3. h.). We remind you that because Italy is a State Party to the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR) and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), all public bodies in Italy are legally obliged to respect, protect and fulfil the right to adequate housing, without discrimination based on race. You will also be aware that the European Court of Human Rights has intervened in this matter, taking the unusual step of indicating interim measures to the Italian Government to stop an imminent violation of human rights in your city.

The municipality’s actions are also not in line with the commitments Italy made in its National Roma Inclusion Strategy, which requires authorities *to overcome an emergency approach, by implementing appropriate and specific measures, so that equality, equal treatment (Article 3 of the Italian Constitution) and fundamental rights and obligations (art. 2 of the Italian Constitution) can be fully observed.*⁷

Therefore we call on the City of Turin and the Italian authorities to adhere to the judgment abolishing the SoE, respect Italy’s domestic laws and commitments, along with its international and EU-law obligations, and take steps to provide all Roma living in the city with adequate,

³ La Città Possibile, available at:

<http://www.diocesi.torino.it/diocesitorino/allegati/48904/La%20Citt%C3%A0%20possibile.pdf>.

⁴ Città di Torino, Deliberazione della Giunta Comunale No. 01849/019, April 23, 2013.

⁵ Temporary flat in this case means: Romani families sign an agreement until the end of 2015 with the NGOs operating the project, in which the Roma agree to abide by several strict conditions such as having valid ID papers, signing up for the National Health System, attending training courses etc. Most of families live in buildings where only Roma are hosted. Buildings monitored by an NGO’s operator who check if the rules are respected. Roma monthly pay from Euro 70,00 to 250,00.

⁶ Città di Torino, Deliberazione della Giunta Comunale No. 01849/019, April 23, 2013

⁷ Presidenza del Consiglio dei Ministri, National Office on Anti-Racial- Discriminations, National Focal Point, National Strategy for the Inclusion of Roma, Sinti and Caminanti Communities – European Commission Communication No.173/2011, available at: http://ec.europa.eu/justice/discrimination/files/roma_italy_strategy_en.pdf.

integrated housing. In particular, the City of Turin must de-segregate all housing provided by the municipality. We also ask the municipality immediately to halt further evictions until adequate, integrated housing can be offered to all Roma who would be forced out of their current living site.

We respectfully request to be informed of all actions undertaken by your respective offices in response to this letter and would welcome the opportunity to discuss this issue further.

Yours Sincerely,

András Ujlaky
European Roma Rights Centre



Vesna Vuletic
Idea Rom Onlus



Cc

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