

URGENT ACTION

ROMA FAMILIES LEFT HOMELESS AFTER EVICTIONS

Around 200 Roma people in Sofia have been left homeless following the demolition of their homes by local authorities, without due process, adequate prior notice, or exploration of alternative solutions, and in direct violation of a ruling by the European Court of Human Rights (ECtHR). Now deprived of shelter, access to water, electricity, and other basic services, the affected families, including children, elderly individuals, pregnant people, and people with disabilities, are living in extremely precarious conditions. Amnesty International considers that such eviction, given the lack of procedural safeguards and resulting homelessness for most of the affected people, amounts to a 'forced' eviction, a practice prohibited under Bulgaria's international and regional human rights obligations. Amnesty International urges the Bulgarian authorities to provide all affected families with adequate alternative housing, medical care, and social support.

TAKE ACTION:

- Write a letter to the government official(s) listed. Use the sample letter below as a guide or use your own words.
- [Click here](#) to report your action(s) on **UA 50.25**. We share this number with the officials we are trying to persuade.

Mayor Vasil Terziev
Sofia Municipality
33 Moskovska Street, 1000
Sofia, Bulgaria
Email: team@vassilterziev.bg

Send a copy of your letter to the address below

CC: Bulgarian Embassy in the United States
Chargé d'Affaires Stefka Yovcheva
1621 22nd Street, NW, Dimitar Peshev Plaza,
Washington D.C. 20008
Email: embassy.washington@mfa.bg

Dear Mayor Vasil Terziev,

I am writing to urgently call for immediate action regarding the ongoing dire situation affecting **Roma families in Zaharna Fabrika in Sofia, Bulgaria**. Beginning on April 15, the Ilinden district administration of Sofia demolished dozens of homes in Zaharna Fabrika, leaving almost 200 Roma people - including children, elderly individuals, and pregnant people – homeless. Most families were left without shelter or access to essential services like water, electricity, healthcare, and education. Since the demolitions, only a few families have been provided with alternative housing by the authorities. The majority remain in extremely precarious conditions, sleeping in tents or relying on makeshift shelters.

The demolitions occurred without adequate due process, prior notice, or genuine consultation to explore alternative solutions, defying the April 11 ruling by the European Court of Human Rights (ECtHR).

I call on you to take immediate action to stop any further forced evictions. I also call on you to ensure that all affected families are provided with alternative adequate housing, along with access to essential services such as medical care, social support, and education. I urge you to act without delay to address this situation and to uphold Bulgaria's obligations under international and regional human rights law.

Yours sincerely,

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

On the morning of April 15, police officers accompanied by heavy machinery entered the Zaharna Fabrika neighborhood in Sofia and demolished dozens of homes that had sheltered Roma families for generations. Almost 200 people, including children, elderly people, pregnant people, and people with disabilities, were left homeless. These demolitions were carried out without prior genuine consultation with the affected families to explore all feasible alternatives to the eviction and resettlement options.

According to the mayor of Sofia, six families were provided with accommodation in municipal dwellings, while nine individuals were placed in a temporary shelter in the same neighborhood. The remaining families, without shelter, were forced to sleep outdoors or in tents provided by volunteers. They had no access to water, electricity, or basic services. Both municipal and state authorities failed to offer adequate temporary housing or support to all affected families. In some cases, local officials publicly refused to assist the displaced families. Meanwhile, the central government remained silent on the actions of the local administration.

The forced evictions in Zaharna Fabrika took place despite an April 11 ruling by the European Court of Human Rights (ECtHR), which ordered Bulgarian authorities to halt the demolitions and provide information on alternative housing. Ignoring the ruling, the Ilinden district administration proceeded, putting Bulgaria in breach of its human rights obligations in relation to people's right to adequate housing and prohibitions of forced evictions. On April 24, ECtHR reiterated its calls for the Bulgarian authorities to provide adequate accommodation. As of now, several Roma families remain homeless and in urgent need. The Sofia Municipality missed the May 5 deadline set by the ECtHR to provide housing for the people displaced.

Bulgaria is a party to several international and regional human rights treaties, including the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, International Covenant for Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, the Convention of the Rights of the Child, the International Convention for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination, and the Revised European Social Charter.

Even if an eviction is considered justified, it can only be carried out when the appropriate procedural protections are in place and if compensation for all losses and adequate alternative housing is provided to all people affected. Furthermore, the ECtHR held in April 2012 that if a community lived in a place for a number of years, the authorities should not treat it the same as other "routine cases of removal... from unlawfully occupied property". Instead, the authorities have an obligation to show that the eviction was 'proportionate' to the aim being pursued (*Yordanova et al v Bulgaria*).

Amnesty International is concerned that this incident represents yet another case in which Roma communities have been forcibly evicted from their homes by local authorities in violation of international and regional human rights standards to which Bulgaria is legally bound.

PREFERRED LANGUAGE TO ADDRESS TARGET: Bulgarian, English, or your own language.

PLEASE TAKE ACTION AS SOON AS POSSIBLE UNTIL: November 9, 2025

NAME AND PREFERRED PRONOUN: Roma community in Zaharna Fabrika (ALL)