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| EUR 15/9364/2025 - Bulgaria - Date: 09 May 2025 |
| URGENT ACTION |  | UA 050/25 |
| Roma families left homeless after evictions |
| BULGARIA |

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.

On the morning of 15 April 2025, police officers accompanied by heavy machinery entered the Zaharna Fabrika neighbourhood 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.

During the Easter holidays, many families were left homeless and destitute. 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 neighbourhood. 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 a 11 April 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 24 April, 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 5 May 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, the Revised European Social Charter. The UN Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, in its General Comment 7, emphasized that evictions are permissible only as a last resort, preceded by a process of genuine consultation with all affected to explore all alternatives to the evictions, accompanied by the provision of adequate alternative housing for all those in need, and safeguards to protect people’s dignity and human rights.

Even if an eviction is considered to be justified, it can only be carried out when the appropriate procedural protections are in place and if compensation for all loses and adequate alternative housing is provided to all people affected. Furthermore, the ECtHR held in April 2012, in a landmark decision, 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. The authorities also have to consider the risk of people being rendered homeless as a result of evictions (Yordanova et al v Bulgaria).

These human rights obligations were blatantly disregarded by Ilinden authorities. Amnesty International considers that this eviction amount to a forced eviction due to the lack of procedural safeguards and resulting homelessness. 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.

TAKE ACTION

* Write an appeal in your own words or use the **model letter** on **page 2**.
* Please take action before **9 November** 2025.
* Preferred language: **Bulgarian, English**. You can also write in your own language.
* **INFO POSTAGE**: Post delivery is possible to almost all countries. Please check at the Swiss Post whether letters are currently being delivered to the destination country.
If not, please send by email, fax or social media and/or via the embassy with the request for forwarding to the named person. Thank you !

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| APPEALS TO | COPIES TO |
| Mayor Vasil TerzievSofia Municipality33 Moskovska Street1000 SofiaBulgariaEmail: team@vassilterziev.bg**Additional target:**Mayor of Ilinden District: info@ilinden.bg | Regional Governor Administration:Email: delovodstvo@sf.government.bgMinister Ivan Ivanov, Minister of Regional Development and Public Works: Email: e-mrrb@mrrb.government.bgDeputy Prime Minister Atanas Zafirov, Chairman of the National Council for Cooperation on Ethnic and Integration Issues: Email: s.gornishki@government.bg-Botschaft der Republik BulgarienBernastrasse 2, 3005 BernFax: 031 351 00 64, E-Mail: embassy.bern@mfa.bg |
| ⭢ **Social media guidance** and **additional targets** see online: [amnesty.ch](https://www.amnesty.ch) 🔍**UA 050/25** |

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Mayor Vasil Terziev
Sofia Municipality
33 Moskovska Street
1000 Sofia
Bulgaria

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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 15 April 2025, the Ilinden district administration of Sofia, under your leadership, 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 of alternative solutions, defying the 11 April ruling by the European Court of Human Rights (ECtHR), which ordered Bulgarian authorities to halt the evictions until information on alternative housing was provided. By disregarding this ruling, the Bulgarian authorities have violated their international and regional human rights obligations, including to guarantee the right to adequate housing. Under these obligations, evictions are only permissible as a last resort, following genuine consultation to consider all alternatives to the eviction, provision of adequate alternative housing, and the implementation of safeguards to protect the dignity and rights of those affected.

**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. This includes establishing a crisis working group that includes key government institutions, civil society organizations, and representatives of the affected community. This group should work urgently to resolve the situation. Additionally, access to effective remedies should be offered for the loss incurred. 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,

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**Copie**

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