



Urgent Action Office 3-1992 Yonge Street Toronto ON M4S 1Z7 Phone: (416) 363-9933 Fax: (416) 363-3103 urgentaction@amnesty.ca
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BULGARIA

ROMA FAMILIES LEFT HOMELESS AFTER ILLEGAL EVICTION

Around 200 Roma people in Sofia, Bulgaria, have been left without homes after local authorities tore down their houses. Officials carried out the demolitions without proper notice, without exploring other options, and despite a clear ruling from the European Court of Human Rights.

Now, the families — including children, older adults, pregnant people, and people with disabilities — are living in very harsh conditions. They no longer have access to shelter, water, electricity, or other basic services.

Amnesty International considers this a forced eviction because the authorities ignored legal safeguards and left people homeless. Forced evictions like this are banned under international and European human rights law — laws that Bulgaria has agreed to follow.

Write to the Mayor of Sofia urging him to:

- Immediately stop all further forced evictions of Roma families.
- Provide alternative adequate housing for all affected families.
- Ensure access to essential services, including medical care, social support, and education.
- Establish a crisis working group that includes key government institutions, civil society organizations, and representatives of the affected community. This group should work quickly to find solutions.
- Offer effective remedies for the harm and losses already suffered by the families.
- Uphold Bulgaria's obligations under international and regional human rights law.

Write to:

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

And copy:

His Excellency Plamen Georgiev Georgiev
Ambassador
Embassy of the Republic of Bulgaria
325 Stewart Street
Ottawa, ON K1N 6K5
Tel: (613) 789-3215 Fax: (613) 789-3524
Email: Embassy.Ottawa@mfa.bg

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

On the morning of April 15, 2025, police officers and heavy machinery entered the Zaharna Fabrika neighborhood in Sofia. They tore down dozens of homes that had sheltered Roma families for generations. Almost 200 people were left homeless. This included children, older adults, pregnant people, and people with disabilities.

The demolitions happened without any real consultation with the families. Authorities didn't explore other options before moving forward with evictions. The evictions took place during the Easter holidays. Many families were left with nowhere to go. According to the mayor of Sofia, only six families were given municipal housing. Nine individuals were placed in a temporary shelter nearby.

The rest were forced to sleep outdoors or in tents donated by volunteers. They had no access to water, electricity, or basic services. Both city and national authorities failed to provide proper shelter and support. In some cases, local officials even refused to help. The central government said nothing about the local administration's actions.

These evictions happened just days after the European Court of Human Rights (ECtHR) ruled against them. On April 11, the ECtHR ordered Bulgarian authorities to stop the demolitions and provide information about alternative housing. Still, the Ilinden district went ahead with the evictions — violating Bulgaria's human rights obligations.

On April 24, the ECtHR repeated its demand for Bulgaria to provide housing. Yet several Roma families are still homeless. The city missed the Court's May 5 deadline to offer shelter. Bulgaria has signed many international and regional human rights treaties. These include the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, and the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

International law says evictions must be a last resort. Authorities must first talk to affected people and look for other solutions. If an eviction goes ahead, families must receive proper housing, support, and compensation.

In 2012, the ECtHR ruled in *Yordanova v. Bulgaria* that long-term residents cannot be treated like people in standard eviction cases. Authorities must show the eviction was necessary and consider the risk of homelessness.

In this case, those rules were clearly ignored. Amnesty International sees the Zaharna Fabrika evictions as forced evictions — a serious human rights violation. This case is yet another example of Roma communities in Bulgaria being unfairly and unlawfully pushed from their homes.

Please take action as soon as possible until November 9, 2025. The UA will be duly updated should there be the need for further action.