

OSCE Conference on Combating Discrimination and Promoting Mutual Respect and Understanding - Follow-up to the Cordoba Conference on Anti-Semitism and Other Forms of Intolerance
Romania, Bucharest, 7 - 8 June 2007
Session 4

Conclusions and Recommendations
from the Side Event on Forced Evictions of Roma in Europe
June 07, 2007

Convened by:

- ODIHR Contact Point for Roma and Sinti Issues
- COHRE – Centre on Housing Rights and Evictions
- Romani CRISS, Bucharest

The side event is organized within the framework of the OSCE Action Plan on Roma and Sinti (Maastricht Ministerial Decision no. 3/03) and it addresses the issue of discrimination and intolerance against Roma and Sinti across OSCE region, on the area of access to legal housing and secure residence.

Every year, we note an OSCE-wide practice of authorities to forcibly evict Roma, without any provisions of alternative housing solutions. Evictions are conducted frequently in short or no notice situations, undertaken with police forces, ending up frequently in violence and abuse of force, and destruction of personal belongings of people.

A humanitarian and unaddressed crisis situation is created when these evicted people are simply left under the open sky, without any support, including during cold winters with temperatures below zero degrees. This situation poses serious concerns from a human rights perspective

Conclusions

- It was observed that there is a steady rise in forced eviction, including eviction of Roma and that there is an erosion in legal protection against evictions, while there is no effective counterweight
- Discrimination plays an evident role in housing and evictions of Roma
- Recognizing housing rights as human rights is still not obvious
- Evicted Roma from cities, localities, are pushed to the outskirts, which leads to residential segregation
- Eviction of Roma happens very often with violence, in both Eastern and Western Europe

Recommendations

- There is need for more direct applicability of international standards, the provisions of the revised European Social Charter, especially of those stipulating that evictions should not lead to homelessness
- There is need for data collection on status of illegal and unregulated settlements of Roma, along with data regarding the problems faced by inhabitants of such communities
- Capacity building for grass-roots organizations as well as communication and dissemination of information regarding standards for protection of housing rights is needed;
- State and local authorities action should not result in isolation, segregation of Roma communities as this contradicts the aim of integration of these communities
- States should make use of structural funds to address the housing needs of Roma community
- Lessons learned of the Social Charter Committee rulings concerning the issue of housing for Roma, Sinti and Travellers should be better disseminated
- Positive action in the area of housing for Roma should be implemented, given the disadvantaged status of this community
- States and authorities are requested to enforce a Moratorium on forced evictions of Roma
- Clear regulation, or even an EU Directive is needed, with direct funding from EC, on the issue of housing for Roma

Recommendation to the OSCE ODIHR

- OSCE to provide expertise and support the participating States in implementing the housing provisions of the OSCE Action Plan on Roma and Sinti
- OSCE ODIHR and to the other inter-governmental organizations to follow up on recommendations of the last two international conferences on Roma, Sinti and Travellers-related policies (Warsaw, October 2005; Bucharest, May 2006) to form an international Task Force on the issue of housing for Roma
- The organizing of an OSCE conference focusing on the issue of forced evictions and housing for Roma was proposed, as suggested also during the HDIM 2006
- ODIHR CPRSI to conduct a survey with regard to responsibilities of authorities in the area of housing, as regards informal and unregulated settlements of Roma and Sinti
- The OSCE ODIHR should take care that side events organized during such conferences become a real forum for direct dialogue with Participating States. It happens often that civil society debates by itself, without representation of delegations of Participating States.

Thank you for your attention.