



**Paper by Dzemila Salkanovic, Associazione 21 luglio**  
**"The right to housing, forced evictions and Roma women in Italy"**

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Associazione 21 luglio is a free and independent Italian association. It works in Italy against discrimination and in defense of **human rights**, with a focus on **children's rights**. It carries out researches in Roma camps and promotes legal actions. It works in different Italian cities and some of its members are Roma.

In the last years Italian policies towards the Roma have been characterized by the **state of emergency**, issued in May 2008 by the Prime Minister Silvio Berlusconi. Since then, the actions promoted by authorities have been characterized by evictions and forced transfers, which involved Roma and Sinti communities. In Rome and Milan, the two most important Italian cities, about **1.000 evictions** have been undertaken in the **last 3 years**. About **3.000 Roma** have been involved, mainly from Romania and former Yugoslavia.

Forced evictions have had a strong impact on **Roma women**. Eviction operations are usually carried out early in the morning by groups of numerous policemen. In these situations, men often without documents escape from their houses, **leaving women and children by themselves**.

In the city of Rome in the last two years many Roma **minors** have been **taken away by the institutions** from their families. Roma women, who are often illiterate, are obliged to sign a document where they state that, in case they are found in a situation of poverty and social distress, they accept that their children are taken from the family and brought into an institute. This is done on the basis of a law issued in 1942, which states that in case a woman is found with her children in a poor and unhealthy environment, the children may be taken away by the institutions. Although this law was overcome by the Italian Constitution and by new laws about foster care and adoption, it still continues to be enforced only in relation to Roma.

The majority of Roma minors living in camps do attend school. Eviction and subsequent leaving from their area implies **school interruption** for Roma minors, with strong consequences on their educational pathways.

Contrary to what international obligations foresee, during eviction operations **no adequate housing alternative** is offered. In the city of Rome in some cases the only solution is **separation of families**. Very few Roma women were forced after the eviction to accept to go with their children and without their husband into reception centers for no longer than three months. Separation of families implied grave inconveniences for Roma women in educational, working and familiar issues.



At the beginning of 2012 Associazione 21 luglio launched an **appeal** against illegal evictions. It was signed by more than 2.000 people, including two Nobel Prize winners, artists, and over 70 civil society organizations. The signatures were delivered to the mayor of Rome.

In late February 2012 the Italian Government submitted a **National Strategy for the Inclusion of Roma, Sinti and Caminanti communities to the European Commission**, which approved it. The National Strategy shows the way for abandoning the eviction system, but it was not adopted at local level. Thus **evictions still continue in Italy**.

Associazione 21 luglio looks with concern to the upcoming electoral period, which will end with elections in spring 2013. In this period a **growing number of evictions** with electoral and propagandist aims is surely foreseen.