

Roma and non-Roma families take to the street in Cluj-Napoca, Romania to protest against the eviction of 270 Roma from their city-centre homes to the segregated Pata-Rat Romani settlement, some 18 kilometres away.

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<http://www.errc.org/cikk.php?cikk=3804>

76 families, the majority Roma, were forcibly evicted from the centre of the city of Cluj-Napoca in Romania. Over half of the families were re-housed in new housing units on the outskirts of the city in the New Pata Rat area, close to a garbage dump and a former chemical waste dump, in inadequate housing conditions. The rooms are overcrowded, they do not provide protection from damp and mould and the sanitation facilities are inadequate. 36 families, including the authors of the blog entry, were not provided with any alternative housing. Most of them had to construct improvised homes. They have no access to water, sanitation and electricity. With only a verbal agreement from the municipality and no formal title to the land, they live in a fear of eviction and of losing their homes again. Two young Roma who experienced the eviction shared it with us their story during the recent mission to Cluj-Napoca.

“The forced eviction from Coastei Street nr. 18 started on 15 December 2010. We aim to be as brief as possible in describing the traumatising event which took place from 15 to 17 December 2010.

In the morning of 15 December, we were woken up at 6.00 am with repeated knocks on the door, by the communitarian police, the public order police and gendarmes. The latter informed us that we were going to be allocated social housing, and so we were to go to the local Mayor’s office to be registered.

On 16 December, a communitarian police unit patrolling Coastei Street used microphones to announce the disaster which was about to take place the following day. We all spent the night very worried and scared, not knowing what was going to happen to us.

The next day, early in the morning, an impressive number of police forces arrived on Coastei Street, joined by the local authorities. We were overwhelmed and terrified by the number of police officers that arrived as if a local match between famous teams was taking place. Following pressure and verbal threats from the local authorities, we accepted the housing they proposed without knowing the exact location and the condition they were in.

It was at that moment I realised that thirty other families including myself were not on the same list as our “blessed” neighbours, who had been allocated a “roof” above their heads. We were taken to the location by bus and presented with a twenty square metres lot destined for housing construction. The local authorities verbally gave us the consent for construction and promised they would provide us with some help (labour force, building materials). In the end, we received ten planks and two beams per family.

Abandoned on a freezing cold at -20 degrees [Celsius], we all felt not only the extremely cold air, but also a sentiment that cannot be described in words. Two years on, we are still left with ten planks and two beams and the same feelings we had on 17 December 2010.

From the thirty families which received twenty sq. m. lot, only some families managed to build a house without help from the mayor's office, who did not stick to the promise to provide us with an official document for the received lot, that would indicate our legal status and would allow us to install the necessary utilities (water, electricity), or and to apply for an identity card at this address.

Following our relocation in the vicinity of the garbage dump and the former chemical waste dump, we can barely breathe in the mornings and evenings, and we risk developing diseases. The lives of the children and adults are at risk. A few people living in the New Pata Rât are already ill.

Added to this is the loss of employment, family doctors, access to public transport, decent living standards, loss of dignity and self-confidence. Still, we see adverts and various campaigns about the social integration of the Roma. We would like to take this opportunity to "thank" the local authorities for their help in our segregation and marginalisation.

We were already socially integrated when living in Coastei Street, we used to have jobs, the children went to high school, we had decent living standards, we had access to the park, etc. Here, by the garbage dump, we feel like in a ghetto, we feel discriminated against from all points of view".

<http://livewire.amnesty.org/2012/04/04/members-of-the-roma-community-forcibly-evicted-from-coastei-street-share-their-story/>