



Fédération internationale des ligues des droits de l'Homme

ORGANISATION INTERNATIONALE NON GOUVERNEMENTALE AYANT STATUT CONSULTATIF AUPRES DES NATIONS UNIES, DE L'UNESCO,
DU CONSEIL DE L'EUROPE ET D'OBSERVATEUR AUPRES DE LA COMMISSION AFRICAINE DES DROITS DE L'HOMME ET DES PEUPLES

International Federation
for Human Rights

Federación Internacional
de los Derechos Humanos

الفدرالية الدولية لحقوق الانسان

OPEN LETTER to

Mr. Boris Tadic, President of the Republic of Serbia

Mr. Mirko Cvetkovic, Prime Minister of the Republic of Serbia

Paris, April 15, 2009

Dear Sir,

The International Federation for Human Rights (FIDH) writes to you to express its deep concerns following the recent eviction of Roma from their houses in the informal settlement in Block 67, New Belgrade.

On April 3, 2009 their houses have been destroyed by order of the Belgrade City Administration. Following their forced eviction, 128 persons (including 84 children) have ended up on the street. According to information provided by our member organisation in Serbia **The Center for Peace and Democracy Development**, they have not been provided with viable alternative housing so far. They had been provided with temporary shelter in Boljevci (Surcin) but had to leave them following an arson attempt and threats from local residents.

FIDH notes with concern that cases of racist statements and racially-motivated violence against Roma have repeatedly occurred in recent years in Zemun Polje, Kamedin, New Belgrade, Ovca and Batajnica in all impunity. FIDH strongly condemns such statements by persons in public office.

FIDH recalls that according to the Committee on Economic Social and Cultural Rights, forced evictions are *prima facie* incompatible with the requirements of the International Covenant on Economic Social and Cultural Rights which guarantees the right to housing, and to which Serbia is a State Party. FIDH further notes that article 39 of the Constitution guarantees the right to free movement and residence in the Republic of Serbia and that the country has recently adopted an anti-discrimination Law.

FIDH requests you to ensure that the Belgrade authorities provide a viable alternative accommodation to all evicted Roma without any further delay: persons expelled from their houses should be provided with due remedy, including restitution, alternative housing and/or compensation in the shortest terms.

FIDH also calls upon you to condemn all statements, made by ordinary citizens or persons in public office, that deny basic human rights to Roma, including their right to freedom of movement and freedom to choose their place of residence, and to intensify your efforts to combat racially-motivated hate speech and racist acts, in conformity with the International Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Racial Discrimination.

We sincerely hope that you will take into consideration our concerns.

Yours respectfully,



Souhayr BELHASSEN,
President