



REPUBLIC OF ALBANIA
PEOPLE'S ADVOCATE



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Follow-up Information concerning the issue of Roma families in Sharra, Tirana

On 23/03/2016, a meeting was held with representatives of the Office of the OSCE Presence in Albania in the premises of the People's Advocate Institution. During this meeting PA's experts presented issues regarding the complaints submitted to the Ombudsman Institution by the representatives of Roma community settled in Sharra waste disposal site in the outskirts of Tirana.

The complaints filed by the Roma community representatives have to do with a verbal warning issued to the families of the complainants, as well as to all other Roma families residing closer to Sharra dump site area, urging them to leave that territory and announcing the demolition of the makeshift shanties they live in. This warning, according to the complainants, was issued by some employees of the Tirana Municipal Police, as well as by employees of Tirana Municipality.

According to the complainants, the community has more than 20 years been located in the shanties in the Sharra area, Tirana. The concern expressed by the complainants is related to the fact that members of the Roma community have been settled there since long and that verbal notification done by the employees of the Municipality of Tirana, gives them no solution to what will eventually happen to them in the aftermath, in terms of their living conditions and access to housing, at least to a hut as a shelter.

Moreover, their biggest concern was related to the fact that, according to the warning done, they should leave the area where they reside by Saturday, on 26.03.2016, otherwise their shanties would be destroyed by the Inspectorate of the Territorial Protection of Tirana Municipality.

The meeting highlighted the fact that the People's Advocate Institution has already initiated an administrative investigation to review these complaints, by seeking explanations and copies of official documentation from the Tirana Municipality. Likewise, through an official letter it was requested from Tirana mayor to organize a meeting with representatives of the Ombudsman Institution on 23.03.2016, which would discuss about this issue, given it represents an emergency.

On our part, we have done an on-site verification, on 21. 03.2016, from which resulted that we have to do with a community of about 30 Roma families, located in the same number of shanties in an area (hill) in the vicinity, but not inside the processing plant of waste. So, the urban area where the waste is processed is next to the shanties of Roma community and separated from it by the roadway and one wire fencing.

During our contacts with the residents of this community, the last have once again repeated their allegations in the complaints cited above, claiming that a form of warning about what was happening, to them had been made since 29.02.2016.

In early March, the residents claimed that Tirana Municipal Police employees have gone there and told verbally that their housings would be demolished. The same has happened most recently, on 19.03.2016, where according to residents, Tirana Municipal Police officers and some civilians have gone to the community and announced that they had to leave until Saturday, 26.03.2016, as otherwise their shanties would be demolished.

An element that will be the focus of our investigation is administrative even the title of ownership over the surface of agricultural land or construction land, where the Roma community of Sharra is located and lives. This is because according to members of this community, this area is privately owned.

During the meeting, it was stressed the fact that if there would be no response expected by the Municipality of Tirana, then from our side would be prepared and sent a recommendation drawing attention to the legal treatment of the issue, by evoking once again the principles and international standards in the cases of forceful (potential) displacements.

It was also noted that Ombudsman, as in all matters pertaining to Roma and Egyptian communities, will follow up closely and attentively all this development.

Our institutional concern, our commitment is to prevent an eventual situation of forceful displacement (expulsion) of this community, as it has resulted in the case of relocation of Roma/Egyptian community near the Artificial Lake, Tirana, or in other previous similar cases.