



# Housing is a human right



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## Page

We hope you will feel inspired to take action on all of our campaigns but remind you that all actions are optional.

This mailing is also available to download at

[www.amnesty.org.uk/youth](http://www.amnesty.org.uk/youth)

# YOUTH GROUP ACTION

## Introduction

This campaign action explores the idea that **housing is a human right** and not a privilege. It goes on to look in more detail at one of the most serious abuses of the right to housing – **Forced Evictions** - when people are forced out of their homes and off their lands against their will, with little notice or none at all, often with the threat or use of violence. The campaign will feature many different countries over the next year but this mailing focusses on the forced evictions that affect **Roma communities in Italy**.

### There are three suggestions for taking action:

1. A discussion activity on housing as a 'gateway right' (don't worry, we explain what that means!)
2. A creative action - send a paper brick to the Italian Prime Minister.
3. Display the exhibition enclosed in the mailing.

## Housing: a right - not a privilege

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**Adequate housing** is a right protected in a number of human rights conventions including Article 25 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

*'Everyone has the right to a good life, with enough food, clothing, housing, and healthcare.'*

### What does adequate housing actually mean?

According to the United Nations, there are seven elements that make up adequate housing:

1. **Security of tenure** – housing is not adequate if people do not have guarantees that they will be able to stay in the property for a reasonable amount of time or if people don't have legal protection against forced eviction, harassment\* (see Glossary) and other threats.
2. **Availability of services and facilities** – housing is not adequate if it doesn't have safe drinking water, a certain level of cleanliness, energy for cooking, heating, lighting, food storage or refuse disposal.
3. **Affordable** - housing is not adequate if its cost prevents people from enjoying other human rights (such as having enough money to buy food).
4. **Habitable** - housing is not adequate if there is no protection from cold, damp, heat, rain, wind or other threats to health.
5. **Accessibility** – housing is not adequate if the needs of disadvantaged people aren't taken into account, for example the disabled or elderly.
6. **Location** – housing is not adequate if it is in a location that cuts people off from employment opportunities, health-care services, schools, childcare centres or if it is in a polluted or dangerous area.

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7. **Culturally Adequate** – housing is not adequate if it does not respect cultural identity. For example, indigenous peoples\* who have a particular relationship with their ancestral lands.

All seven of these things have to be in place to be considered adequate housing.

### Does this mean that governments have to provide free housing for all?

No, but it does mean that there are things governments should stop doing, and things they can proactively do to enable people to have access to the right to adequate housing.

#### Things governments should **NOT** do

- Carry out or encourage forced evictions (more on forced evictions later)
- Develop policies and practices that lead to people being homeless.

Governments should do this straight away.

#### Things governments **SHOULD** do

- Provide low interest loans, housing benefit and subsidies\*.
- Ensure the vulnerable people are helped (such as the elderly, disabled)

Governments can do this gradually, depending on how much money they have, to work towards the right to adequate housing for everyone.

## Housing as a ‘gateway’ right

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Adequate housing is often called a ‘**gateway right**’ – meaning that without this right, other rights become more difficult to obtain. So, without adequate housing – the rights to health, education, to make a living and safety are all much harder to achieve.

### Gateway right activity

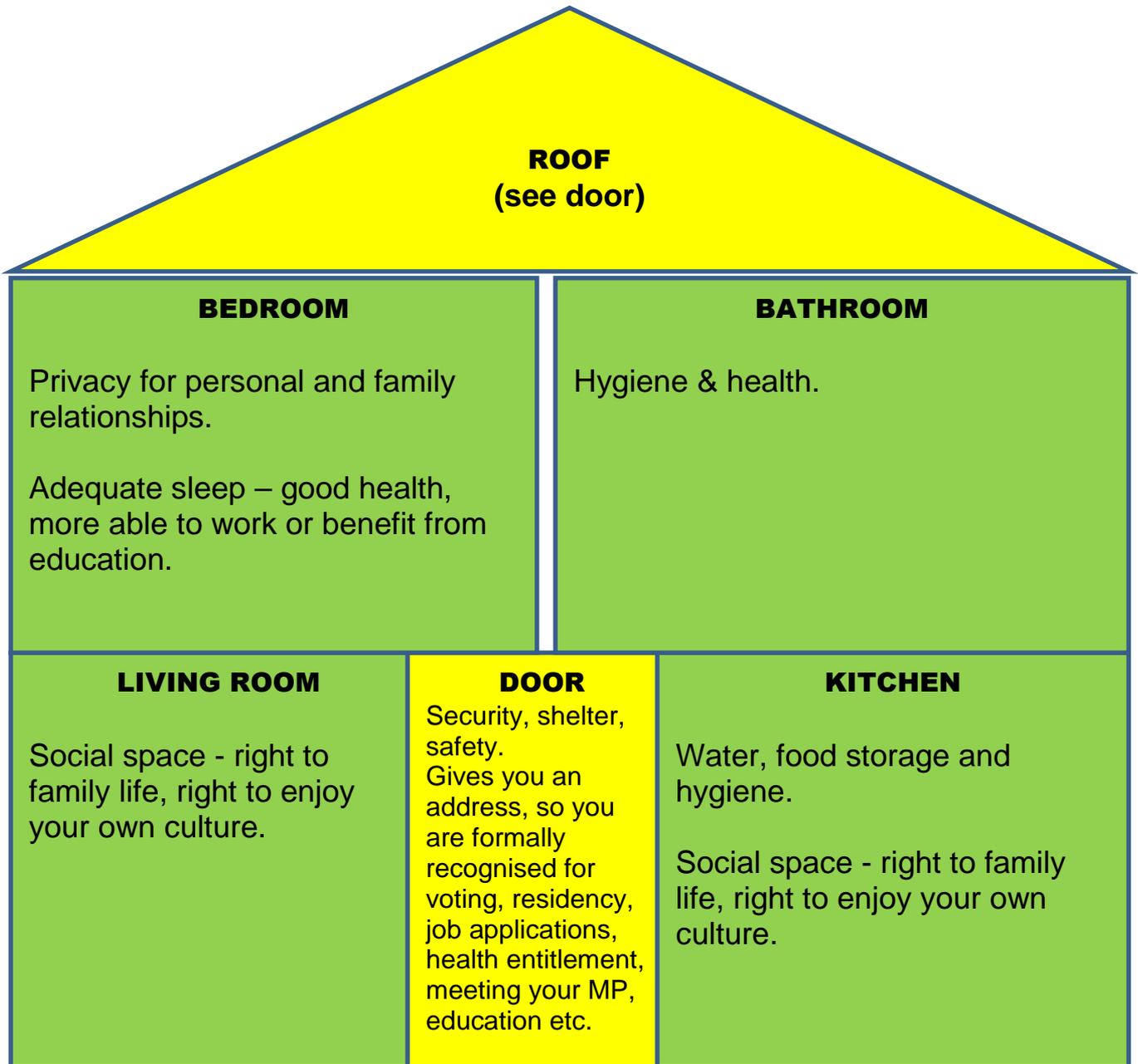
To explore the issue of housing as a ‘gateway’ right do the following activity in your group:

1. Draw an outline of a house; label the roof, door, kitchen/living room, bedroom and bathroom/toilet.
2. Split everyone into small groups or pairs – allocate each group a different room.
3. Give everyone a copy of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (there is a simplified version at the end of this mailing).
4. Ask each group to think about what rights that room gives them.
5. Take some feedback.
6. Now ask everyone to imagine that they have been evicted from their home, with no warning or legal help. What have they lost? What freedoms, rights or capabilities have they lost? What does this make you vulnerable to? Think about gender– in what ways are women and girls affected differently to boys and men.

See the next page for some ideas (or use it as a hand out).

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## What rights and freedoms does your home give you and your family?



**The Universal Declaration of Human Rights includes the following rights:**

- Right to adequate housing
- Right to health care
- Right to education
- Right to clean water and sanitation
- Right to participate in decisions that affect our lives
- Right to security
- Right not to be discriminated against

# YOUTH GROUP ACTION

## Forced Evictions: an introduction

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Forced Evictions are one of the most serious violations of the right to housing.

Forced evictions are when people are forced out of their homes and off their lands against their will, with little notice or none at all, often with the threat or use of violence. People lose their livelihoods, their neighbourhoods and social networks as well as their access to basic services such as schools, medical care, water and sanitation. They have to leave behind possessions and are not offered alternative housing. The United Nations states that forced evictions are illegal.

'The practice of forced evictions constitutes a gross violation of human rights, in particular the right to adequate housing'.  
*UN Commission on Human Rights*  
1993

Forced evictions are often carried out in the name of development: to 'regenerate' the city or build a road or a dam, or to create a tourist resort. The people targeted are almost always poor, and often belong to the most marginalized\* social groups, including ethnic minorities\*. Many live in 'slums' or informal settlements. More often than not it is the government, the very people who are supposed to protect them, that carry out forced evictions.

As people are given little or no warning they do not have the chance to challenge an eviction order or seek legal help.

Evictions themselves aren't illegal but they should be carried out only as a last resort. Other alternatives need to have been explored first and certain steps need to have been put in place including:

- genuine consultation with the affected people;
- adequate and reasonable warning beforehand;
- information on the proposed evictions in a language that people can access and understand;
- adequate alternative housing and compensation for all losses. People must not be made homeless;
- access to legal help.

## Amnesty's campaign to end forced evictions

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Amnesty's campaign to end Forced Evictions is calling on governments to:

**1. Respect the right to adequate housing:**

This means stopping and preventing forced evictions and making sure no-one is made intentionally homeless. It also means introducing laws that give people guarantees that they can stay on the property for a reasonable amount of time (security of tenure).

**2. Protect the right to adequate housing:**

This includes ensuring protection against forced evictions and harassment by landlords or companies. This also includes making sure people living in 'slums' and informal settlements have similar rights to people living in more traditional housing.

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### 3. **Fulfil the right to adequate housing:**

This includes introducing plans to improve the standard of housing. The people affected by these plans need to have a say in how the plans are put together and carried out. People who are particularly poor or disadvantaged should be given priority when these plans are devised.

### 4. **Make sure there is no discrimination:**

For example, making sure women aren't discriminated against and are given the same rights as men.

This year AIUK is focussing on six countries:

**Kenya, Nigeria, Serbia, Romania, UK & Italy.**

The Forced Evictions campaign will continue to be a priority for Amnesty in 2013 but some of our focus countries will change.



## **The Roma and the Right to Housing**

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The Roma are one of Europe's oldest and largest ethnic minorities and one of the most disadvantaged. They have been discriminated against for centuries. Across Europe Romani people are regularly denied their rights to housing, health care, and education. They receive poor quality education in schools, where they frequently separated from everyone else, which means that they struggle to find jobs after they leave school. Unable to find work, they cannot afford better housing, buy medication or pay the costs of their children's education. They therefore get caught in a vicious circle. The roots of this stem from centuries of prejudice and discrimination. Many experience racist assaults and police ill-treatment.

Across Europe many Romani people find it hard to get decent housing due to this discrimination. Millions of Roma live in isolated slums, often without access to electricity or running water putting them at risk of illness. But they cannot get the health care they need.

As they rarely have any basic rental agreements or contracts, most Roma communities living in informal settlements are vulnerable to eviction from their homes with little or no warning. In such cases of forced eviction, the authorities make no attempt to offer alternative housing or adequate compensation. Not only is a home lost, but also possessions, contact with friends and family, jobs and school places. Faced with homelessness they have no choice but to live in temporary or make-shift shelters and remain at risk of forced evictions over and over again.

### **The Roma in Italy**

Recently, the situation for Roma living in camps in Italy has become very serious with Roma facing forced evictions and discrimination on a huge scale. A mother of five children who has been evicted several times with her family from a number of unauthorised settlements in Milan told Amnesty International:

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*“The evictions hurt us; they take away our rights and our happiness. The police treat us like thieves; they shout at us, they push us. It is traumatic, my eight-year-old son did not speak for months after an eviction because of the shock.”*

In May 2008 the Italian government introduced the “*Nomad Emergency*” law. This led to a wave of forced evictions from unauthorised camps in the Italian city of Milan that made hundreds of Roma families homeless.

Italian authorities are forcibly evicting them often at such short notice that they are unable to collect their belongings. Families are often evicted without any offer of alternative accommodation, forcing them to build a new shack somewhere else or end up homeless.

Others are moved into “official” camps in isolated areas. Separated from everyone else, surrounded by fences and cameras, these families experience great difficulty getting even basic services such as schools, shops and health care. Children have been particularly affected.

On 16 November 2011, the Italian Council of State declared the “*Nomad Emergency*” unlawful. However, very little has changed for Roma since. In the past ten months, many more Roma have been forcibly evicted in Rome and Milan and left homeless.

### Daniel's story

Daniel has lived in Italy for 12 years and was a resident of the authorised camp of Via Triboniano. He and his family were forcibly evicted in May 2010.

*“I am mighty upset. I lived in an authorized camp, I worked, my children were going to school, and now I have nothing”, he said.*

After the destruction of their home, the family stayed in the camp without permission for a few months, but were later ordered to leave. They had to sleep in their car for a few weeks:

*“I had a job as a builder, but I lost it, because I couldn't use the car for work, as I had to use it as home.”*

Since May 2011 they have been living in an informal camp on the outskirts of Milan. They were forcibly evicted by local authorities five times between May and November 2011 alone. Each time they rebuilt a shack in the same area. After the latest eviction, in November 2011, the camp's residents rebuilt their shacks in the only space available, next to the place where they had piled rubbish for months, infested with rats.

Daniel's children, who are 18, 14 and 9, stopped going to school after the eviction from Via Triboniano.

*“The children are sad not to go. But we are not managing, we are not stable enough, there are too many evictions, and what do we do if there is another eviction and we have to go somewhere else? They can't change 10 schools in a year.”*

## **YOUTH GROUP ACTION**

### **TAKE ACTION 1:**

#### **Do the 'gateway right' activity on page 3**

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This will help introduce the idea of housing as a human right to youth group members new to the issue.

### **TAKE ACTION 2:**

#### **Send a message to the Italian Prime Minister on a paper brick**

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Instead of a traditional letter we'd like you to write a message or slogan on a paper brick. We will then build a mock house from the bricks and send it (or a photo of it!) to the Italian Prime Minister.

We've attached a brick template for you to use – but you can make your own bricks.

##### **What to write:**

We'd love you to come up with your own message or slogan. Here are some ideas for inspiration:

**Stop Forced Evictions of the Roma!  
Respect Roma rights: stop forced evictions.**

##### **Where to send your bricks:**

Anne Montague  
Youth Coordinator - Amnesty International UK  
17-25 New Inn Yard  
London EC2A 3EA

**Deadline:** End of autumn term 2012

### **TAKE ACTION 3:**

#### **Display our exhibition**

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We have sent you a new poster exhibition on Forced Evictions which you can display in your school or college. It features many of the countries Amnesty is focussing on for this campaign. The leaflet which accompanies the exhibition gives you advice on where to hold the exhibition, how to promote it and how to get press coverage.

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## Resources

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Order from our mailing house by calling 01788 545553 and quoting the relevant code:

- **DIG 026** - Forced Eviction 8 page A4 briefing (enclosed)
- **DIG 027** - Forced Evictions double-sided poster (enclosed)
- **DIG 029** - Forced Eviction activist exhibition (should you need an extra copy)
- **DIG 028** - 12 page, A4 briefing on Roma and Gypsy travellers
- **DIG 031** - Forced Eviction stickers (enclosed)
- **DIG 033** - Roma stickers
- **DIG 037** – Roma myth-buster (enclosed)

## \*Glossary

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**Convention:** an international agreement (in this context).

**Ethnic Minority:** a national or racial group living in a country or area which contains a larger group of people of a different race or nationality.

**Harass:** to disturb, pester, or trouble repeatedly.

**Indigenous peoples:** people who have always lived in a place or country rather than having arriving from another place.

**Marginalise:** to make a person or a group of people unimportant and powerless in an unfair way.

**Subsidy:** money given by a government or other organisation to pay part of the cost of something.

**United Nations:** after the horrors of World War II, leaders from the around the world joined together in 1945 to form the United Nations (UN). Its purpose is to bring all nations of the world together to work for peace and development, based on the principles of justice, human dignity and the well-being of all people.



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## The Universal Declaration of Human Rights

<p>Article <b>1</b></p> <p>All human beings are born <b>free &amp; equal</b> in dignity and rights</p>	<p>Article <b>2</b></p> <p><b>Everyone is entitled to all the rights &amp; freedoms</b> regardless of race, colour, sex, language, religion, belief, wealth or origin</p>	<p>Article <b>3</b></p> <p>Everyone has the right to <b>life, liberty &amp; security</b> of person</p>	<p>Article <b>4</b></p> <p>No one shall be held in <b>slavery or servitude</b></p>	<p>Article <b>5</b></p> <p>No one shall be subjected to <b>torture</b> or to cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment</p>
<p>Article <b>6</b></p> <p>Everyone has the right to <b>recognition</b> everywhere as a person <b>before the law</b></p>	<p>Article <b>7</b></p> <p>All are <b>equal before the law</b> &amp; are entitled without any discrimination to equal protection of the law</p>	<p>Article <b>8</b></p> <p>Everyone has the right to <b>legal help</b> when rights granted by a country to its citizens are not respected</p>	<p>Article <b>9</b></p> <p>No one shall be subjected to <b>arbitrary arrest, detention or exile</b></p>	<p>Article <b>10</b></p> <p>Everyone is entitled in full equality to a <b>fair &amp; public hearing</b> by an independent &amp; impartial tribunal</p>
<p>Article <b>11</b></p> <p>Everyone charged with a penal offence has the right to be presumed <b>innocent until proven guilty</b></p>	<p>Article <b>12</b></p> <p>No one shall be subjected to arbitrary <b>interference</b> with their privacy, family, home or correspondence, nor to attacks upon their <b>honour &amp; reputation</b></p>	<p>Article <b>13</b></p> <p>Everyone has the right to <b>freedom of movement</b></p>	<p>Article <b>14</b></p> <p>Everyone has the right to seek &amp; enjoy in other countries <b>asylum</b> from persecution. People lose this right if they do not respect what is written here</p>	<p>Article <b>15</b></p> <p>Everyone has the right to a <b>nationality</b></p>
<p>Article <b>16</b></p> <p>Men &amp; women have the right to <b>marry</b> &amp; to found a family. No one should be <b>forced</b> to marry</p>	<p>Article <b>17</b></p> <p>Everyone has the right to own <b>property</b></p>	<p>Article <b>18</b></p> <p>Everyone has the right to freedom of <b>thought, conscience &amp; religion</b></p>	<p>Article <b>19</b></p> <p>Everyone has the right to freedom of <b>opinion and expression.</b> This includes sharing ideas with people from other countries</p>	<p>Article <b>20</b></p> <p>Everyone has the right to freedom of <b>peaceful assembly and association</b></p>
<p>Article <b>21</b></p> <p>Everyone has the right to take part in the government of their country. <b>Voting</b> should be regular &amp; secret, &amp; all votes should have equal value</p>	<p>Article <b>22</b></p> <p>Everyone as a member of society, has the right to social security &amp; is entitled to realisation of <b>economic, social &amp; cultural rights</b></p>	<p>Article <b>23</b></p> <p>Everyone has the <b>right to work</b> &amp; those doing the same work should get equal pay. Everyone has the right to form &amp; join a <b>trade union</b></p>	<p>Article <b>24</b></p> <p>Everyone has the right to <b>rest &amp; leisure,</b> including reasonable working hours &amp; paid holiday</p>	<p>Article <b>25</b></p> <p>Everyone has the right to a <b>good life,</b> with enough <b>food, clothing, housing, and healthcare.</b></p>
<p>Article <b>26</b></p> <p>Everyone has the right to <b>education,</b> elementary schools should be free &amp; compulsory</p>	<p>Article <b>27</b></p> <p>Everyone has the right to freely participate in the <b>cultural life</b> of the community</p>	<p>Article <b>28</b></p> <p>Everyone is entitled to a <b>social &amp; international order</b> in which the rights &amp; freedoms set out here can be fully respected</p>	<p>Article <b>29</b></p> <p>Everyone has duties to the <b>community</b></p>	<p>Article <b>30</b></p> <p>No one has the right to act in such a way as to destroy the rights &amp; freedoms set out in this declaration</p>

Amnesty International

## **YOUTH GROUP ACTION**

### **BRICK TEMPLATE:**

**Write your message to the Prime Minister of Italy**

A large rectangular area filled with a solid orange color, intended for writing a message.A large rectangular area filled with a solid pink color, intended for writing a message.A large rectangular area filled with a solid yellow color, intended for writing a message.