

## TURKEY

### HUNDREDS RISK FORCED EVICTION IMMINENTLY

**Hundreds of residents in neighbourhoods of the Sur district in Diyarbakır province, south eastern Turkey, are at imminent risk of forced eviction. For over a month now, their water and electricity supplies have been cut off in an apparent attempt to force them out. They have not been adequately consulted or compensated.**



*These children are among those in danger of being forced from their homes. ©Refik Tekin*

Hundreds of residents in the Alipaşa and Lalebey neighbourhoods of the Sur district in Diyarbakır province, south eastern Turkey, are at imminent risk of forced eviction. Since 23 May, during the fasting month of Ramadan, water and electricity supplies to residents' homes were cut off in an apparent attempt to force them out.

Between December 2015 and March 2016, parts of the Sur district were subjected to round the clock curfews in the context of clashes between the

armed Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK) and the state security forces. Tens of thousands of residents were displaced and many have still not been able to return. Residents of Alipaşa and Lalebey returned to their homes after being displaced for up to six months. In March 2016, a compulsory purchase order was issued affecting all 16 Sur neighbourhoods as part of a redevelopment project that affects the entire district. Inhabitants began receiving eviction notices in December, demanding that they vacate their homes within one week, but most residents remained. Lawyers and residents told Amnesty International that they were verbally notified that the demolitions would start in April 2017. At the end of April residents reported loud speaker announcements from mosques demanding them to evacuate their homes within seven days. On 23 May, water and electricity supplies were cut off and partial demolition of already evacuated homes started.

Residents told Amnesty International that they had not been genuinely consulted about the plans or offered alternative housing or adequate compensation for their losses. All residents reported deep fear and anxiety as to an uncertain future, whilst expressing their wish to remain in their neighbourhoods where they had strong community and family ties, and depend on the area for their livelihoods and children's education.

The Turkish authorities have a duty to ensure that no one is forcibly evicted from their homes and that any evictions that are carried out are only as a last resort and in full compliance with international human rights law and standards, including the right of return of Internally Displaced People. Arbitrarily cutting off water and electricity supplies to force people from their homes is also prohibited under international law.

**Please send a fax, email or letter without delay.** (Postage is \$2.50.) **Urge the authorities**

- \* to immediately halt all evictions until genuine consultation with affected residents is conducted to identify all feasible alternatives to evictions and resettlement options, and until adequate alternative housing, compliant with requirements under international human rights law, is provided to all persons affected;
- \* to restore water and electricity supplies to the residents without delay;
- \* to ensure that adequate compensation is offered to all residents including tenants representing the true value of their loss and the harm they have suffered.

**Here is the contact information you need:**

*Minister of Environment and Town Planning*

Mehmet Özhaseki

Çevre ve Şehircilik Bakanlığı

Vekaletler Cad. No: 1 Bakanlıklar

Ankara, Turkey

Fax: 011 90 312 418 0406

Email: [mehmet.ceylan@csb.gov.tr](mailto:mehmet.ceylan@csb.gov.tr)

Salutation: Dear Minister

**Please send a copy to**

His Excellency Selçuk Ünal

Ambassador for Turkey

197 Wurtemberg Street

Ottawa, Ontario K1N 8L9

Fax: (613) 789-3442

E-mail: [embassy.ottawa@mfa.gov.tr](mailto:embassy.ottawa@mfa.gov.tr)

**Additional information**

In January 2016, a round the clock curfew in the context of armed clashes was imposed on the two neighbourhoods of Alipaşa and Lalebey, lasting for one week. Almost all residents left their homes during the curfew, mostly returning after a period of one to six months. In March 2016, at the end of the curfew in other parts of the district, the authorities issued a compulsory purchase order affecting 16 neighbourhoods including Alipaşa and Lalebey, having announced that buildings in the Sur district would be demolished as part of an urban redevelopment project.

Dozens of residents told Amnesty International that they had not been consulted about the redevelopment plans, any alternative housing or the levels of compensation they would receive. Home owners with title deeds to their properties reported that money had been deposited into their bank accounts without their agreement, and that the amount was wholly insufficient to compensate for the loss of their homes and possessions. Tenants and those without title deeds reported that they had received nothing and were not provided with alternative housing. Notices they received in December gave them seven days to leave their homes, which the vast majority ignored. After the notices were sent to residents, authorities verbally noted that the demolitions would begin after the Referendum in April 2017.

The UN Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights has emphasized in its General Comment 7 that evictions may be carried out only as a last resort, once all other feasible alternatives to eviction have been explored in genuine consultation with the affected persons. All potentially affected groups and persons, including women, persons with disabilities, as well as others working on behalf of the affected, have the right to relevant information, full consultation and participation throughout the entire process. They also have the right to propose alternatives that authorities should duly consider.

Even when an eviction is considered to be justified, it can only be carried out when appropriate procedural protections are in place and if compensation for all losses and adequate alternative housing is provided. Under international law, forced evictions and housing demolition must not be used as a punitive measure against people who lack residency or other status. States have an obligation not limit access to water services as a punitive measure and arbitrarily disconnecting such services amounts to a human rights violation.

The United Nations Guiding Principles on Forced Displacement were developed by the UN Special Representative on Internally Displaced People in 1992 based on existing standards in international law to address the specific needs of IDPs. The Principles require that persons should not be subjected to arbitrary displacement, and that any displacement should be no longer than required by the circumstances (Principle 6). They require that the authorities ensure that accommodation is provided for displaced persons and ensure that displaced persons have an adequate standard of living (Principle 18). The Principles state that nobody shall be arbitrarily denied of property and possessions and that those that they leave behind are protected against destruction, arbitrary and illegal appropriation, occupation or use (Principle 21).

The UN Basic Principles and Guidelines on Development-based Evictions and Displacement (Basic Principles) require states to carry out impact assessments prior to the initiation of any project that could result in eviction and displacement. Impact assessments must provide information about the area, the individuals affected, including information about their relationship with the location (for example their income-generating activities), public services in the area etc.