

AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL

WRITTEN SUBMISSION

Amnesty International works, in conjunction with organisations working directly with Scottish Gypsy Travellers, to monitor and support the implementation of the recommendations as outlined in the Scottish Parliament's Equal Opportunities Committee (EOC) "*Inquiry into Gypsy/Travellers and Public Sector Policies (2001)*"¹ and their more recent inquiries; "*Gypsy/Travellers and Care (2012)*"¹ and "*Where Gypsy/Travellers Live (2013)*"¹

The EOC's thorough research on accommodation issues; based on evidence submitted by various stakeholders, testimony provided by community members and site visits led to the production of comprehensive recommendations. The Government's response so far demonstrated a lack of understanding and a failure to assume leadership in the implementation of the recommendations.

With regard to site tenancy rights, the EOC recommended:

„Gypsy/Travellers as site tenants should have the same rights and responsibilities as people living in fixed housing. We expect that the Scottish Government will work with Gypsy/Travellers and supporting bodies on the development of a standard Gypsy/Traveller site tenancy agreement.”

Amnesty International calls for strong Governmental leadership in implementing the EOC's recommendations and establishing a comprehensive legal framework that would provide for effective and efficient actions and accountability at all levels. The focus must shift from further research and discussion towards concrete actions with a clear timeframe as well as robust evaluation and accountability mechanisms. Finally, all action must be considered and undertaken with the active involvement and participation of community members. Comprehensive actions not only within legislation and policy concerning the right to adequate housing were also called for by the UN Special Rapporteur on adequate housing who visited Scottish Gypsy Travellers' sites during her mission to the United Kingdom in 2013. The Rapporteur recommended that the Government "strengthens efforts to address stigma and discrimination for the Gypsy and Traveller communities in relation to the wider spectrum of rights, starting with the recognition that cultural adequacy in housing is a pillar for inclusion, and that legislation and policy are not enough to overcome local obstacles."

Therefore we see the current Housing (Scotland) Bill proposal scrutinised by Parliamentary Infrastructure and Capital Investment Committee as a unique opportunity to address housing issues of Scottish Gypsy Travellers community, implement EOC's and Special Rapporteur's recommendations regarding accommodation of the community, and ensure equalisation of rights and responsibilities of Scottish Gypsy Travellers as site tenants with those of people living in fixed housing. We suggest that the Committee considers amending the current proposal and includes site tenancy issues relevant to Scottish Gypsy Travellers in Housing (Scotland) Bill.

Amnesty International
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