



Cases of discrimination in housing

1. February. A Coruña. Harassment in housing.

This case came to us through the press alert system. A residents' association organised demonstrations against the resettlement of families from the Penamoa shanty town. Three demonstrations were organised for the month of February. These types of demonstrations have been seen in other cases where victims are subjected to real harassment by the entire neighbourhood, going even as far as threats and coercion. They are not aimed at specific individuals with certain characteristics but rather at an entire population group with a single common denominator: ethnic origin. The FSG therefore considers this a case of harassment based on ethnic origin (racist harassment).

La Voz de A Coruña

Fecha: 05/02/2009

La asociación vecinal O Cruceiro organiza tres nuevas protestas contra los realojos de chabolistas

La Voz

A CORUÑA | La asociación vecinal O Cruceiro-Oza-Urbanización Soto acordó ayer en una reunión continuar con las movilizaciones contra los realojos en Eirís y la zona de la calle Oleoducto de chabolistas procedentes de Penamoa. Francisco Mourelo, presidente de la entidad, explicó que, salvo que los vecinos sean convo-

cados desde el Ayuntamiento para discutir el problema, llevarán a cabo manifestaciones los días 11, 18 y 26 de este mes. La primera partirá de la plaza de Pablo Iglesias y terminará en la calle Oleoducto, y el itinerario de la segunda será entre la plaza de la Palloza y los nuevos ministerios. La última comenzará en la plaza de Orense y concluirá en María Pita.

2. January. Asturias. Discrimination in housing.

This case of discrimination came to our attention through the press. A Roma man decided to move because his house was in a very poor state of repair. He complied with all formalities and when he went to sign the contract he was

told, point blank, that the flat would not be rented to a gypsy. He went back to the rental agency through which he had found the flat and was informed that they would not do anything. They said they were in this business to make money and that's all. The victim himself said things to the effect that: "These situations lead to hatred on both sides and can give rise to more serious problems. I do not want to live in a ghetto; I'm no different from anyone else." This is a clear example of direct discrimination in the area of housing which is prohibited under Directive 2000/43/EC and the law transposing it.

3. January. Pontevedra. Harassment in housing.

A family was relocated and living for one year in Caritel through the Shanty-Town Eradication Plan following the demolition of Vao. During that year they had to endure demonstrations just outside their home every Saturday by neighbours belonging to the "anti-relocation platform". The situation became even worse when the father of the family was accused of assaulting a neighbour, with no regard for presumption of innocence. The accused went voluntarily to the local Civil Guard police station to make his statement. When finished he asked the Sergeant for a copy and the latter refused but did give him another form to sign. The father refused to sign it because he did not understand what it said. The family is tired of being constantly harassed by neighbours and the authorities due to their social class and their ethnic origin.

CASE 1

- 4. February. Granada. Discrimination in Housing.** A Roma woman who uses FSG services in Granada went to rent a flat in a town in the province of Granada. She spoke with the real estate agency and they arranged a time to see a flat. The woman decided to rent the flat that she was shown. The real estate agent then asked her if she was Roma and she responded that she was and that she had money and would have no problem paying the rent. The agent then told her that she could not rent the flat to her because "in Ogíjares, gypsies were not welcome...". In other words, she refused to rent her the flat only because she was Roma thus constituting direct discrimination in access to housing for reason of ethnic origin prohibited by Directive 2000/43/EC and the law transposing it (62/2003).
- 5. March. Talavera. Discrimination in housing/ other.** A Roma woman owed money to her homeowner's association. The woman proposed doing the cleaning for the block of flats to pay off her debt (a similar arrangement had been offered to other homeowners in the past). While the majority of homeowners agreed with this proposal, there were a few who did not want to allow her to make payment in this way. Moreover, the woman's flat required repairs for which the association is responsible but they use the debt as an excuse to not do the work. However, she is not the only one who owes money and repairs are made to the flats of those other debtors. Apparently, the only explanation for this is the poor opinion that some homeowners have of the Roma community.
- 6. March. Galicia. Discrimination in housing.** This case came to us through the press. The Galician edition of the El País newspaper ran the following article in March: *"REFUSAL TO RENT DUE TO ROMA ORIGIN" Stage three of the works in Coruña are under way and include the demolition of shacks at the Penamoa Roma settlement. The next on the list could be the one belonging to Mercedes García, known as "Lola" due to her dancing and singing skills which are reminiscent of the matriarch of the Flores family. But no one is willing to rent her and her three children and niece a home to move to. "Owners first say yes but when they see that I'm Roma they make some excuse." An advertisement for a flat read as follows: "No dogs, no gypsies"*.
- 7. April. Bizkaia. Discrimination in housing / access to goods and services / the media.** A Roma family from Sestao was relocated to a flat in La Arboleda. The neighbours refused to accept the relocation claiming that *"they do not want the patriarch living in their midst."* they go on to claim that *"he has over 50 court cases pending"*. They were able to get 5 000 signatures to try to prevent the resettlement. The local town hall, Trápaga-Trapagaran, has refused to register the couple and their five children. During the resettlement, the family had to be accompanied by four social workers and escorted by a regional police patrol car. In the end, the family had to leave the house on the very first day due to lack of security. As a result, the situation of discrimination has spread to other towns and four Basque municipalities supported the measure to refuse to register Roma at the town hall. In September 2009, Ararteko took a stand and the Town Hall registered the family. The resettlement became effective on 12 May 2009 despite a massive protest by the townspeople. The media which covered the story published discriminatory headlines, presuming the delinquency of the family.
- 8. April. A Coruña. Discrimination in housing.** Family in Shanty-town Eradication Programme. The mayor of a provincial town managed to acquire a flat through one of his contacts. The flat did not have all of the required permits and, in fact, the owner had to stop the reform work he was doing. During that interval, the neighbours found out that the flat was for a Roma family and they started to protest saying that they did not want Roma there and sounded the alarm that the flat had not been legalised. It is important to realise that many of these neighbours were also living in flats which were not legalised and were therefore calling on others to comply with rules that they themselves were neglecting. The neighbours called the press and put signs up at bus stops against the resettlement of Roma. One day, in the wee hours of the morning, a group of unidentified people broke into the flat and destroyed everything. They even cut off the electricity and water. The town hall filed charges.



- 9. May. Vigo. Discrimination in housing.** A local service specialising in flat rental was looking into the possibility of housing a Roma family in one of its flats. When the owner met the family on the day the contract was to be signed he refused saying that he did not like the family. This is an everyday example of discrimination in the field of housing based on ethnic origin which is specifically prohibited under Directive 2000/43/EC and the law transposing it.
- 10. August. Asturias. Discrimination in housing.** A local Roma couple was looking to rent a flat and asked the FSG to accompany them in their search and mediate on their behalf with the flat owners. The woman, who could easily have been identified as non-Roma given her physical characteristics, went with the FSG worker to visit a flat which the family was interested in. The flat was just what the family was looking for and the owner kindly promised to hold it for them until the next day when the contract was to be signed and the deposit paid. The next morning when the owner saw the husband (who, in contrast to his wife, was easily identifiable as a member of the Roma community), she changed her mind and told them that she was very sorry but had rented the apartment the previous afternoon. The wife did not believe the owner and the next day she went to the rental agency to ask whether that flat was free or not and was told that it had not been rented. This is a typical example of discrimination in the area of housing which many members of the Roma community are still suffering despite its prohibition by Directive 2000/43/EC and the law transposing it.
- 11. September. Huesca. Discrimination in housing.** A young woman and participant in the Acceder employment programme went to the housing rental office to rent a flat. She chose a flat to go and see with the real estate agent and went back the next day to speak with the owner. The owner told her that he would be happy to rent her the flat but the homeowners association had agreed to not rent to Roma. This is a clear example of instruction to discriminate which, according to the Directive and the law transposing it, is also considered discrimination and is punishable just like a case of direct discrimination.
- 12. October. Jaen. Discrimination in housing.** A young woman moved to Jaen to work for the FSG. She spent a few days looking for a flat and visited several. She called the owner of a flat for rent who began to ask her a series of questions. She asked about the woman's employer and when she responded that it was the Fundación Secretariado Gitano the owner said that she would not rent her flat to Roma. The young woman tried to reason with the owner but her final word was that this was all well and good but that she would never rent to immigrants or Roma. Another clear example of discrimination in housing but not only against anyone of Roma ethnic origin but also against those associated with that ethnic group such as a person working for an organisation such as the FSG.
- 13. October. Pontevedra. Discrimination in housing.** This is a case which we learned about through an article in a local newspaper. The article shows the photograph of a flat with a sign that says: "For sale. Gypsies Only". It quotes the owner of the flat who explains: "I can't stand my neighbours. They make my life impossible. I'm not harming anyone by selling my flat to Roma; I treat Roma just like anyone else. If they are racist, that's their problem. I would sell it to a Roma person for 30 million [pesetas] before selling it to one of my neighbours for 100 million." Here we see how negative prejudices and stereotypes towards the Roma community are used as a way to take revenge on one's flat neighbours.

Diario de Pontevedra

Se vende casa «sólo a gitanos» por una rabieta con los vecinos

► La propietaria del inmueble asegura que no se considera racista

NURIA FERNÁNDEZ PRIETO

PONTEVEDRA. «Se vende sólo a gitanos». Esta es la carta de presentación de una casa en venta que se encuentra en la avenida de As Corvaceiras. Igual que el caso que tuvo lugar la semana pasada en Sanxenxo, Mari Cruz García Vidal ha decidido poner en venta su propiedad única y exclusivamente a gitanos «porque mis vecinos son unos sinvergüenzas que no me dejan vivir. Yo no hago daño a nadie vendiéndoselo a los gitanos».

Insiste en que sufre agresiones verbales por parte de los residentes en el lugar en reiteradas ocasiones y que «me llaman de todo menos guapa», por eso, según explica Mari Cruz, la instaron varias veces a que abandonase el inmueble.

Según la propietaria, el hecho de abrir un pequeño negocio en el local le supuso varios años de reyerta con sus vecinos: «tuve que cerrar mi negocio porque ellos me denunciaron». Además, hace unas semanas tuvo que realizar arreglos en el techo -ya que tenía humedades en su piso y en el del vecino- y esto le supuso de nuevo

«Se lo vendería antes a un gitano por 30 millones que a cualquiera de mis vecinos aunque me ofreciese 100 millones»



Casa en venta en la avenida de As Corvaceiras, número 24. RAFA FARÍÑA

más luchas con los residentes en la zona. «Fui a arreglarlo y me entero de que el presidente de la asociación de vecinos ya había ido al Concello a denunciarlo. ¡No me dejan ni vivir!».

CUESTIÓN DE RAZA. «Antes de vendérselo a los payos, se lo vendo a los gitanos para que estéis más tranquilos -por sus vecinos-. Ya que no me queréis a mí allí, pues que vivan los gitanos».

Tras estas declaraciones, Mari Cruz confesó que no se trata de

una cuestión de razas propiamente dicha, si no que es más bien «una rabieta con los vecinos. Yo pagaba religiosamente y ellos siempre estaban incordiando». De hecho, no teme ser considerada racista: «yo considero a los gitanos otras personas más. Si ellos son racistas es su problema».

Señaló también que se niega rotundamente a vender el piso a cualquiera de los residentes en la zona: «se lo daría a un gitano por 30 millones antes que dárselo a un vecino que me pague 100».



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DiariodePontevedra

Sin noticias del 'payo'

► El propietario del polémico cartel de A Vichona desoye las peticiones de retirada del anuncio

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SANXENXO. El polémico cartel que ofrece una vivienda "también a familias gitanas" en un edificio de A Vichona continúa dando de qué hablar. Según van pasando los días, el debate, lejos de ir perdiendo fuerza, cobra cada vez más interés. Buena parte de culpa la tiene el 'mutis' del propietario del piso en cuestión, José Antonio, quien no da señales de vida. Una amable voz en 'off' informa a todos aquellos que llaman al número de teléfono que aparece en el cartel que se están poniendo en contacto con un teléfono-fax y que su mensaje será debidamente grabado y registrado.

Así pues, resulta imposible saber a ciencia cierta si que el autor de tan peculiar iniciativa publicitaria está al tanto de todo el revuelo provocado por el cartel de la discordia. Según afirman desde el colectivo gitano, ya se han puesto en contacto con el propietario para solicitar la retirada del anuncio. "Se comprometió a retirarlo en pocos días", explicaba a finales de la pasada semana uno de los portavoces de los afectados. Sin embargo, el cartel permanece en lo más alto del edificio.

Los sentimientos que despierta el anuncio son de lo más variado. Desde luego, lo único que no provoca es indiferencia. En su momento, algunos creían que el polémico eslogan lo único que pretendía era llamar la mayor atención posible. Sin embargo, hay quien considera que esta medida lo único que pretende es fastidiar a los vecinos. Así lo consideran algunos vecinos de A Vichona, quienes señalan que "si realmente lo que le interesa es vender el piso, que ponga algún tipo de oferta. Si lo que te importa es obtener el mayor beneficio posible, imagino que lo menos relevante es a quién



El dueño del inmueble de A Vichona todavía no ha retirado el cartel de la discordia. J. CASAL

le vendas o alquiles el inmueble", señala un cliente habitual de uno de los establecimientos cercanos al edificio. Este vecino opina que "no creo que a la gente le parezca mal que busque clientes de diferentes razas. Lo que les molesta son las formas."

DEMASIADO 'DESMADRE'. Por otra parte, están las personas que creen que todo este asunto "estase desmadrando demasiado. E o propietario do piso, así que pode facer o que lle pete, sempre e cando non incumpla a lei", matiza una vecina.

Mientras tanto, el colectivo gitano aguarda a que el dueño del inmueble cumpla su palabra y haga que el cartel pase a mejor vida. no descartan ponerse en contacto con el Concello para protestar.

Un estilo que comienza a 'crear escuela'

El cartel de A Vichona comienza a crear escuela. Yes que la idea del dueño del inmueble ubicado en la parroquia de Adina empieza a ser imitado en otros lugares.

Por ejemplo, una vecina de As Corvaceiras, en Pontevedra, decidió colgar un anuncio muy similar en su propiedad, si bien en este caso se aclara que la venta se realizará «sólo a gitanos», que era el eslogan inicial del de Sanxenxo, y que el responsable achacó a un «error tipográfico».

La propietaria, Mari Cruz García Vidal, reconoce que se decidió a llevar a cabo esta iniciativa por los problemas de convivencia que tiene con algunos vecinos.

«Non fai nada malo»

También hay gente que opina que José Antonio "no está a facer nada malo. É certo que o cartel é bastante peculiar, pero non ten nada de malo que prefira alugalo a xitanos", asegura otro vecino.

No obstante, conviene recordar que algunos vecinos que viven en los portales contiguos barajaron en su día la opción de presentar una querrela contra el propietario.

CASE 14

14. October. Pontevedra. Discrimination in housing. Just as in the previous case, here we find a person selling his flat who uses the Roma community to attract attention. The sale sign read as follows: "For sale or rent. Roma families welcome." As it seemed that this practice was spreading, a few representatives of social organisations asked the town hall to order the removal of the sign and even threatened to file an official complaint with the courts.

- 15. December. Huelva. Discrimination in housing.** A young woman was looking to rent a flat for herself and her partner. After several telephone conversations with the owner of a rental flat she reached an agreement to rent it (price, contract, etc.) and they set an appointment to see the flat. When the girl showed up with her boyfriend the owner asked them directly if they were Roma and they said they were. The owner then said that he was very sorry but that he wouldn't rent his flat to Roma. This is an everyday example of direct discrimination suffered by the Roma community in the housing market where pay slips, work contracts etc. make no difference.
- 16. December. Asturias. Discrimination in housing.** A Roma family consisting of a woman and her four nephews lived in a flat they rented through the Foundation in the town of Salinas. The homeowners association changed the lock on the door of the building and gave each resident a copy of the key except for the Roma family who knew nothing about the change and found themselves locked out of their home. They spoke to one of the neighbours who sent them to talk to the president of the homeowners association who sent them to speak to another neighbour who, in turn, sent them back to speak to the president. The president finally told them that the keys must have been given to the Foundation through which this family was renting. The woman then went to the FSG to get help. The rental intermediary at the FSG knew nothing about the lock change and told them that no one had come with a new set of keys. The FSG worker accompanied the woman back to her building where they knocked on the president's door but no one answered. In the end a neighbour lent the woman her key so that she could make a copy but the key she was entitled to as a resident of the building was never given to her.

Classification

These **16 cases** account for **12.21% of the total 131 cases of discrimination** collected by the FSG in 2009 where housing was the second most frequent area of discrimination after the media.

Victims of housing discrimination are varied. It affects men and women and all age groups to the same degree.

The clearest consequence of the Sociological Research Centre's 2005 Barometer where over 40% of the Spaniards interviewed responded that they would feel "very or quite" uncomfortable if they had Roma neighbours, is discrimination against Roma in housing. The data gathered

in this report are a clear example of situations of discrimination in accessing housing (refusal to rent flats⁵) and harassment⁶ faced by some of the people who are resettled under shanty-town eradication schemes.

A new phenomenon discovered this year were the advertisements⁷ stating that homes were for sale or rent "even to Roma" using the Roma community as a threat against neighbours living in the buildings where these flats were for sale.

⁵ See cases 4, 9 and 15 as examples.

⁶ See cases 1, 7 and 8 as examples.

⁷ See cases 13 and 14 as examples.