

OUT ON THE STREETS NEXT WEEK



Eight months pregnant Raigum Choudhury with her 14 month old son Shati, who face eviction.

WEEK

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Photos by Dave Harris

SIX families from Bangladesh who are living in damp, overcrowded, squalid conditions in two slum properties are to be evicted by the Labour-controlled Camden Council.

The families, which include two pregnant wives, have no alternative accommodation and fear they will be thrown on the streets next week.

They occupy 59 and 61 Coburg Street, Easton, which are to be rehabilitated by the council together with houses in the surrounding roads.

The families claim they are existing in extremely overcrowded conditions with one family to a room. Three families have to share a basement kitchen, the only sink—and an outside toilet.

'Damp and in need of repairs'

Further, they say that the houses are damp and in need of urgent repairs to make them liveable. The families do not even have the basic facilities let alone "luxuries" like hot water.

The husbands and older sons are employed in the catering industry where they work very long hours for low wages.

For many years the husbands lived in "men only" hostels in Camden but when

Somor Ali came to Britain over 20 years ago when the British Government were actively encouraging immigration, because of the labour shortage.

'Dad sleeps on a mattress'

Two years ago his wife and three sons were allowed to join him. For a few months they stayed with friends but had to move out because the landlord said the house was overcrowded. For the last 18 months the family have been squatting in Coburg Street.

Eldest son, Abdul Bashir, told the *Chronicle*: "We have one room and a kitchen and it is very cramped. My mother and the children sleep together while my father sleeps on a mattress on the kitchen floor. My father works very hard but doesn't earn very much money—if we are evicted I



Abdul Karim and his pregnant wife, Supfuia.



Abdul Bashir

their families were allowed to join them in Britain they had to move out. With nowhere else to go they were forced to squat.

Raigum Choudhury is eight-and-a-half months pregnant. She has been squatting for six months. She sleeps in one room with her husband and three children, aged 12, seven and 14 months.

She said: "If the council throws us out we have nowhere else to go."



Somor Ali who sleeps on the kitchen floor.



The two condemned properties where Bengali families are crowded in one family to a room.

don't know where we will go."

Abdul Karim cannot afford to find anywhere else to live. He supports his pregnant wife and elderly father on the £32 wages he receives working as a cook. They live in one room and have to share the sink, toilet and kitchen with 14 other people. The council has given them one week to move out.

All the families are afraid of being split up and put into bed and breakfast hotels. Their main fear is that they will get accused of being immigrant spongers on the ratepayers.

Their cases are being investigated by the Bengali Workers Housing Association in East London and the Community Relations Commission.

• A council spokesman said: "We have possession orders on the two properties and the families must be out by October 4 when workmen are due to move in and carry out rehabilitation work."

"The two houses are to be converted into 16 flats. The families will be treated in the same way as all homeless. They will be allocated bed and breakfast."