

THE SH/FT

OUR WORK IN ACTION

WHY SUPPORT THE SHIFT

Launched as an organization in May 2020, The Shift came into being at a singular time in history alongside Covid-19, racial uprisings, as well as civic unrest and political turmoil in many parts of the world. Housing injustices are deeply intertwined with the pandemic and systemic oppression, making human rights work more urgent than ever.

Our cause — to secure the right to housing globally — is part of the answer to healing the long-broken systems that perpetuate inequality.

Our strengths — to hold governments accountable using international human rights law; convene countries and diverse stakeholders; draw big-picture policy connections; and share best practices from around the world — inform a unique and concrete approach to rehabilitating these systems and forging more equitable societies.

As we build our movement, we ask for your help to carry out our mission.

Human rights are not a trend; they are not selective or earned. They are immanent and represent the core contract we've made as a society to treat each other with equality, dignity, and respect, and without discrimination. By investing in The Shift, you are investing in humanity and the promise that we can do better by each other.

We are a young organization with deep knowledge and vast networks, working at a unique intersection of issues — human rights, housing, urbanism, climate change, and financialization. We have the relevant expertise, experience, and energy required to fight effectively and strategically for safe, adequate, and affordable housing for all in the context of a pandemic and a world hungry for justice.



Leilani met with housing advocates outside of a local emergency shelter for migrants and refugees on a research visit to Paris, France. April 2019. Courtesy The Shift.

The Shift has quickly gained an international reputation for being an authority on securing housing as a human right. This recognition has come from respected institutions and grassroots groups alike: we are just as likely to be contacted by the [OECD](#), [IKEA](#), and the [Harvard Graduate School of Design](#) as we are [Moms 4 Housing in Oakland](#), tenants networks in Berlin, or the Campesinos union in northern Argentina.

We are perpetually expanding our networks and in regular conversation with urban thought leaders around the world, such as acclaimed scholar [Saskia Sassen](#); [Maimunah Mohd Sharif](#), Executive Director of the [United Nations Human Settlements Programme](#); Connecticut State [Senator Saud Anwar](#); and Stirling Prize-winning architect [Amanda Levete](#).

We are committed to creating change by raising awareness, shifting public perception, provoking policy shifts, and mobilizing a vast network of allies across borders to build a strong movement. What follows is a snapshot of who we are and what we do. The diversity of our activities and partners is a testimony to our agility, breadth, and dedication to achieving high-impact results.




The pages that follow illustrate our pioneering work to date as well as the wide-ranging programs and partnerships we have built to achieve our ambitions for further growth and meaningful impact.

In order to continue this critical work, we need your help. Please join us by pledging support that will tangibly improve the lives of people — many of them facing life and death circumstances — and bolster a worldwide initiative committed to radical yet practical change.

OPEN SOCIETY
FOUNDATIONS

Model Emergency Housing Legislation

Protecting the Right to Housing
during COVID-19



In the face of the global pandemic, The Shift partnered with the Open Society Justice Initiative to develop emergency legislation to demonstrate the measures governments must take to protect the right to housing during Covid-19. Courtesy The Shift.



During her tenure as the United Nations Special Rapporteur, Leilani met with Colombian migrants in Santiago, Chile, who were forced to squat in abandoned buildings as a result of unaffordability and discrimination. Courtesy Janice d'Avila.

GOVERNMENT INITIATIVES

Governments at all levels have the ability to make lasting change through legislative reform, innovative policies, and the distribution of resources. We recognize the unique power of governments, work to hold them accountable, and help them achieve their human rights obligations under international law.

Right to Home: Convened by The Shift with the [Canadian Urban Institute](#), the [Right to Home](#) is a regular gathering of elected City officials and staff from across Canada committed to strategizing how best to secure the right to housing through new and existing opportunities and collective advocacy.

Rights in City Governance: A collaboration with four cities from across Canada to develop and implement human rights-based housing strategies and corresponding infrastructure. This is a pilot project that will be scaled to other local and national jurisdictions around the world.

Political Engagement: The Shift collaborates with all levels of government to develop right to housing legislation and/or constitutional amendments, like we've done in Norway, Chile, and Spain. We also work with legislators and political candidates in different countries to support the development of their housing platforms.

Refugees & Migrants: Throughout 2021, The Shift will work with local governments in Greece to develop comprehensive human rights strategies to secure the right to housing for refugees and migrants. This is a collaborative initiative with [Open Society Foundations](#).



Mayor Katrin Stjernfeldt Jammeh hosted a ceremony at City Hall to celebrate the Swedish City of Malmö's commitment to realizing the right to housing in collaboration with The Shift. March 2019. Courtesy The Shift.



Migrants displaced by fires at the Moria Reception and Identification Centre in Lesbos, Greece, were relocated to Kara Tepe, a temporary camp that fails to meet international human rights standards. October 2020. Courtesy Panagiotis Balaskas.

JUSTICE INITIATIVES

While governments across the globe have made human rights commitments related to housing, they often fail to take the necessary measures to implement those commitments or do not fully understand what is required of them. The Shift undertakes a number of activities to enhance government knowledge and accountability.

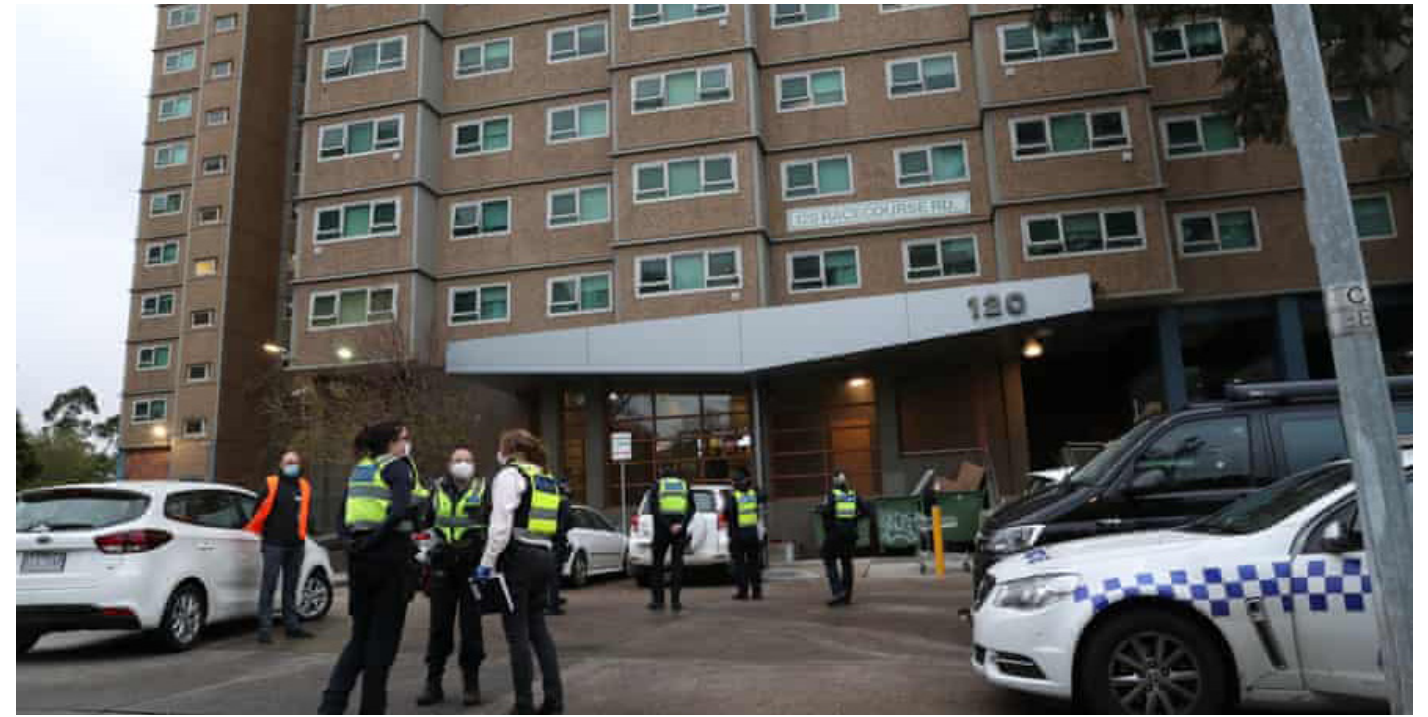
Letters of Concern: We issue letters of concern to governments and other actors around the world that set out evidence regarding breaches that have occurred with respect to the right to housing. Since May 2020, we have issued letters for the following: the forced eviction of an informal settlement in the province of [Buenos Aires](#); violations of the right to housing experienced by public housing tenants due to Covid-19 in [Melbourne](#); and concerns over the protection of the right to housing for migrants and refugees in [Lesbos](#).

Legal Standards: The Shift ensures that governments have the information and standards they need to adequately implement the right to housing through tools like [“The Human Rights Protocol for Homeless Encampments,”](#) [“Model Emergency Legislation for the Implementation of the Right to Housing during Covid-19,”](#) and [“Human Rights Directives Regarding the Financialization of Housing”](#) (forthcoming).

Strategic Litigation Support: The Shift supports strategic litigation in cases aimed at ensuring the implementation and/or enjoyment of the right to housing. In 2020, for example, we intervened in cases in the United States and Mexico.

“Conditions at the camp were unfit for dignified habitation and inconsistent with international human rights norms.”

— **Letter of Concern regarding conditions in the Moria Reception and Identification Centre, Lesbos, Greece**



In response to a Covid-19 outbreak, the Government of Victoria instituted a police-enforced hard lockdown on nearly 3,000 migrants and refugees living in social housing blocks in Melbourne, Australia, that violated residents’ right to housing. August 2020. Courtesy *The Guardian* and David Crosling.



Police violently evicted the residents of Guernica, a settlement in the province of Buenos Aires, Argentina, leaving over 3,000 people in homelessness during a pandemic. October 2020. Courtesy *La Capital*.

GLOBAL RESEARCH INITIATIVES

The Shift undertakes qualitative analyses of current housing conditions around the world, the results of which are used in turn to support local advocacy efforts and hold governments and private actors accountable to their human rights commitments.

Fact-Finding Missions: Because cities are on the frontline of the housing crisis and housing delivery, we undertake fact-finding research missions in urban centres around the world. We use these missions to assess the living conditions of particularly vulnerable populations as well as levels of government compliance with respect to right to housing obligations under international human rights law.

Topical Briefings: The Shift produces succinct briefing notes for various stakeholders on emerging issues related to the right to housing, such as climate-related disasters and informal settlements; access to justice mechanisms for local governments; ESG investing; refugees, migrants, and the right to housing; and the financialization of housing.

“Not only did women talk to us of the struggle to keep a roof over their heads and their fear of eviction, we heard first-hand how they have been defending their communities against violent forced evictions from the lands they have been compelled to occupy, like Guernica.”

— End of Mission Statement, Buenos Aires



On a research visit as Special Rapporteur to Seoul, South Korea, Leilani met with residents facing eviction from their neighbourhood, Ahyeon-dong, which was slated for demolition to make way for new high-rises. May 2018. Courtesy The Shift.



Fires commonly break out in informal settlements due to poor conditions, lack of access to formal electrical grids, and the burning of trash as the sole means of garbage disposal. Manila, Philippines. September 2017. Courtesy Veejay Villafranca.

ACTIONS & CAMPAIGNS

The Shift's actions and campaigns raise the profile of right to housing issues that require greater public attention and government engagement. They also provide opportunities to mobilize and grow our movement.

PUSH – The Film: Since its release in 2019, the documentary film [*PUSH*](#) has been used by local advocates around the world – tenants in Berlin, Parliamentarians in Sweden, members of informal settlements in Canada and Chile – to raise awareness and galvanize action with respect to the international housing crisis. To date, screenings have helped influence key legislative changes in Denmark and Toronto, for example, and are helping to drive tenant activism in the United States, the United Kingdom, and Europe. One of our objectives in 2021 is to partner with organizations in Asia and Southern Africa to further disseminate the film and spark conversations on the right to adequate housing in these regions.

Global Homelessness Action (Launched in December 2020): The [*Global Homelessness Action*](#) is an international digital initiative that provides people experiencing homelessness the opportunity to collectively claim their right to housing and demand urgent action from governments through video, audio, and written testimonies. The Shift worked with 36 partner organizations across five continents to bring this action to fruition.

Right to Home Call to Action (September 2020): Convened by The Shift with the [*Canadian Urban Institute*](#), the [*Right to Home working group*](#) issued an action calling on all orders of government in Canada to secure the right to housing and increase support for municipal governments so they can better address the housing crisis in relation to the compounding effects of Covid-19.



Jess, a resident of a homeless encampment in Berlin, Germany, participated in the Global Homelessness Action to urge her government to uphold the right to housing. December 2020.

**RIGHT TO HOME:
THE \$1 BILLION
QUESTION**

Thurs, Sept 24 | 1:00–1:30pm (EST)
Twitter Live
🐦 @Make_TheShift

A conversation with Ana Bailão, Deputy Mayor of Toronto; Lisa Helps, Mayor of Victoria; and Leilani Farha, Global Director of The Shift.
Moderated by Vass Bednar, Public Policy Strategist.

THE SH/FT

Four black and white portraits of the panelists: Ana Bailão, Lisa Helps, Leilani Farha, and Vass Bednar.

In conjunction with the Right to Home working group, The Shift hosted a live discussion on Twitter with Deputy Mayor of Toronto Ana Bailão and Mayor of Victoria Lisa Helps. September 2020. Courtesy The Shift.

UK Cladding & Fire Safety Campaign (Launched in July 2020): Three years after the death of 72 residents in a fire at Grenfell Tower in London, some estimate that up to 600,000 people in the UK continue to reside in apartment buildings with dangerous cladding and other fire safety defects that put their lives at risk. The Shift is working with a network of residents in the UK to amplify their demands and support their advocacy to secure homes that are safe and dignified.

Tenant Mobilizing Against Renovictions (Launched in April 2020): The Shift unites and supports tenants across national borders to challenge the practices of corporate landlords who use renovations and rent increases to push tenants out of their homes. Through press and social media, for example, we mobilized attention for this issue and connected disparate networks of Akelius tenants in Canada, Germany, and the UK, who have now come together to challenge the practices of one of the largest landlords in the world.

Climate Change Action (To be launched in 2021): The Shift introduced the right to housing to the Paris Agreement Conference of Parties (COP) in 2017 to bolster awareness of the connections between housing and climate change. For COP26, we are planning an action that will demonstrate the inextricable benefits of implementing the right to housing within the context of addressing climate change. The goal is to develop new partnerships and mechanisms to ensure climate action promotes the right to housing.

Action for Pension Fund Accountability (Launching in 2021): Pension funds are a major contributor to the financialization of housing. In partnership with SHARE, The Shift will be undertaking a human rights education action to motivate pension funds to redirect their investments away from predatory residential real estate.

“By now, our governments are well aware of the long-lasting consequences of evicting people from their homes, not to mention the financial strain it places on other government services like our shelter systems. Eviction is a traumatizing experience that, like loss of employment and chronic poverty, can have serious physical and mental health consequences.”

— Leilani Farha and Alyssa Brierley, *Now Magazine*



The fire at Grenfell Tower, a low-income high-rise in one of London's wealthiest boroughs, was a direct result of decisions taken by all levels of governments to ignore fire safety standards and concerns of residents in order to cut costs during a facade renovation. June 2017. Courtesy Dan Kitwood.

PUBLIC & DIGITAL INITIATIVES

The Shift believes that making change is contingent upon developing and building leadership capacity. We aspire to foster leadership training and develop resources, networks, and platforms that support tenant and community organizers around the world who are agitating to secure the right to housing.

Right to Housing Leadership Training: The Shift is currently developing a “Right to Housing Leadership Training” initiative to support the development of grassroots leaders, multiply opportunities for international collaboration, and grow the global movement. Equipped with robust knowledge and resources, these leaders will be in a stronger position to mobilize within their domestic context and work toward the realization of the right to housing. The first training will take place in Canada in 2021.

The Shift App & Digital Resources: It is our intention to develop “The Shift App” to connect and empower housing movements around the world. The app, in combination with our website, will become a go-to resource for free and accessible digital resources on the right to housing, including flyers, posters, and training materials, to support groups who are mobilizing globally on right to housing issues.

CITY BUILDING & CULTURAL INITIATIVES

We know that in order to bring about systemic change, we must continuously foster new partnerships across sectors and engage in hands-on projects and creative collaborations. Our ability to grow a broad and inclusive movement grounded in practical methods and tactical thinking hinges on harnessing the skills of diverse stakeholders and thought partners – architects, urbanists, geographers, artists, economists, and cultural innovators.

The Recovery of Beirut – Housing & Land Use: Having consulted at the end of 2020 with the [Beirut Urban Lab](#), [Columbia World Projects](#), and the [Post Conflict Cities Lab at Columbia University’s Graduate School of Architecture, Planning and Preservation](#), The Shift is now collaborating with the [UN-Habitat](#) and the [UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights](#) to formulate collective, integrative, and human rights-based approaches to Beirut’s recovery.

Collaboration with Amanda Leveté & the Canadian Urban Institute: Working with Stirling Prize-winning British architect [Amanda Leveté](#) and the [Canadian Urban Institute](#), we will convene a small team of the world’s best designers, planners, and urbanists to develop a housing solution prototype for “Main Street” that can be deployed to create integrated, self-sustaining, participatory, and deeply affordable neighbourhoods.

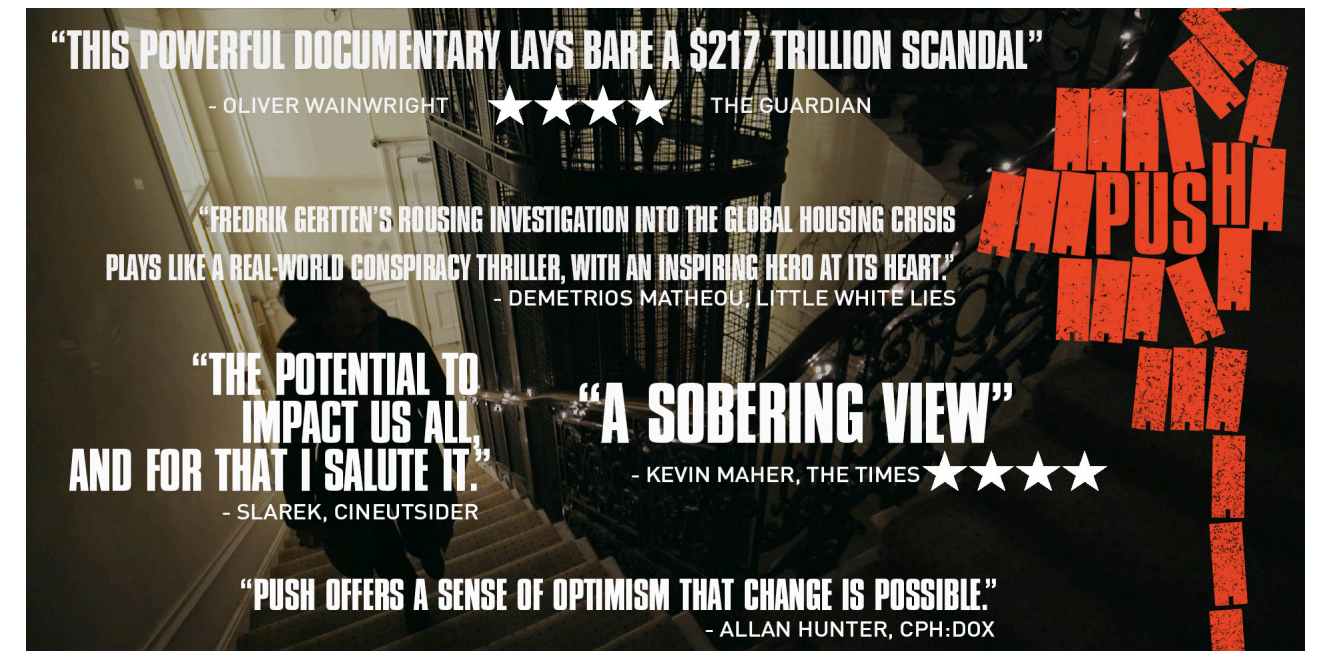
Art & Architecture: Homelessness is a global phenomenon that has surged in the face of the pandemic. The Shift will be working with the Director of the [Architekturmuseum](#) in Munich and the curator of the exhibit “Who’s Next: We Need to Talk About Homelessness,” scheduled to show at the [Pinakothek der Moderne](#), November 2021 – February 2022.

FILM, MEDIA & PUBLIC SPEAKING

Part of what makes The Shift such a distinct initiative is our unique combination of legal aptitude, international human rights knowledge and experience, and media savvy. In order to maximize visibility for our work and housing as a human rights emergency, we understand and leverage the power of storytelling – be it through films, podcasts, journalism, or speaking engagements – to raise awareness, open minds, and drive the conversation among audiences far and wide.

PUSH – The Film (2019): An award-winning documentary from director Fredrik Gertten investigating the factors that make housing one of today’s most pressing global issues. The film follows Leilani as she embarks on a quest to gain a deeper understanding of the financialization of housing and its radical effects on cities and their residents. *PUSH* has screened in over 70 countries, and we continue to work with communities, government officials, civil society organizations, academic institutions, architects, and others to show the film and ignite conversations about the housing crisis, human rights, and solutions. We are currently working with the [EU Commission](#) and the [Inter-American Commission on Human Rights](#) to screen it regionally.

PUSHBACK Talks: A weekly podcast hosted by Fredrik and Leilani, *PUSHBACK Talks* features leading advocates, scholars, politicians, and journalists from around the world who exchange ideas and explore topics related to housing, financialization, and urbanism. Upcoming episodes in 2021 will address Beirut’s reconstruction, Chile’s constitutional reform, the role of banks in human rights violations, and the Mayor of Lisbon’s right to housing vision.



Op-Eds & Journalism: Leilani maintains an ongoing practice of advocating for the right to housing in the media and frequently publishes opinion pieces in international outlets, including *The Guardian*, *Thomson-Reuters*, *Al Jazeera*, and *The Globe and Mail*. She also speaks regularly with journalists to provide background for relevant stories. In 2021, Leilani will publish pieces on Golden Visas, ESG investing and real estate, and the role of pension funds in the financialization of housing.

Public Speaking: Leilani and other members of The Shift team are regularly invited to give keynote presentations, address governments and housing providers, deliver university lectures, and speak on public and academic panels, alongside fellow leaders in housing, human rights, urbanism, and public policy sectors. With a reputation for offering provocative yet grounded, solutions-based approaches, we are often solicited to challenge and inspire audiences to think and act differently.

“Unprecedented amounts of global capital are being invested in housing as security for financial instruments and traded on global markets, which is having devastating consequences for people.”

— Leilani Farha, *The Financial Times*



Leilani delivers a TEDx Talk on the financialization of housing at Queen’s University. January 2018. Courtesy TEDxQueensU.

“City residents around the world – from Cape Town, Berlin and Hong Kong to Copenhagen, Santiago and Los Angeles – have started to demand government accountability and their demands are clear – governments must regulate investment in housing and reclaim housing as a human right.”

— Leilani Farha, *The Guardian*



Al Jazeera’s James Bays interviews Leilani about the drivers of the global housing crisis. November 2018. Courtesy The Shift.

“We talk about rent deferral but what about rent forgiveness? People will come out of the pandemic burdened with debt and unable to pay rent for months longer. Homelessness has a huge economic cost as it creates a burden on healthcare systems. A stable, housing-secure society is good for the economy.”

— Leilani Farha, *Thomson-Reuters*

HOW YOU CAN SUPPORT THE SHIFT

The Shift is grateful for the support we receive from the Government of Germany, the Commonwealth Foundation, Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation, the McConnell Foundation, and Open Society Foundations.

We are currently seeking additional funding to grow our organization and meet increasing global demands for our work.

For more information on how to support, please contact:

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