



Global housing crisis results in mass human rights violations – UN expert

GENEVA (5 March 2020) – A UN human rights expert on housing has warned States that their failure to address the global housing crisis has resulted in mass human rights violations.

"For six years I have sounded the alarm that the world is on an unsustainable path with increasing levels of homelessness worldwide especially in affluent countries, forced evictions carried out with impunity, and the cost of housing escalating at alarming rates making housing unaffordable even for the middle class," said the UN Special Rapporteur on adequate housing, Leilani Farha.

"All of these constitute violations of human rights, including the right to housing," she noted.

"Alarmingly, there are 1.8 billion people across the world living in abhorrent housing conditions and homelessness, sometimes lacking even a toilet. This suggests that perhaps States lack the knowhow to address this global crisis."

In response, Farha has issued [Guidelines for the implementation on the right to housing](#), challenging Governments to do more and to do better in 16 critical areas, including addressing homelessness on an urgent and priority basis, upgrading informal settlements, and regulating the financialization of housing consistent with human rights.

"The present global housing crisis is not like any previous crisis of its kind," said Farha during the presentation of her Guidelines to the UN Human Rights Council. "It is not caused by a decline in resources or an economic downturn but rather by economic growth and expansion.

"Due to the unprecedented nature of the crisis, tinkering around the edges of an unsustainable model of economic development will not work. The right to housing must be implemented in a manner that shifts the way housing is currently conceived, valued, produced and regulated.

"If the recommendations included in my report are followed, this shift will be achieved and States will have a chance at meeting their commitments under the Sustainable Development Goals and international human rights law," the expert said.

During the six years of her mandate, the Special Rapporteur spoke to hundreds of people living in different housing conditions across the world. These experiences formed the basis of the Guidelines alongside a series of consultations held with national and local governments, civil society and experts in the area of housing, finance, and human rights.

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Leilani Farha is the [UN Special Rapporteur on adequate housing](#) as a component of the right to an adequate standard of living, and on the right to non-discrimination in this context. She took up her mandate in June 2014. Farha is the Executive Director of the NGO *Canada without Poverty*, based in Ottawa. A lawyer by training, for the past 20 years Ms. Farha has worked both internationally and domestically on the implementation of the right to adequate housing for the most marginalized groups and on the situation of people living in poverty.

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