



Egypt must embrace its people to embrace the right to housing

GENEVA/CAIRO (3 October 2018) – Egypt has taken considerable steps to resolve its pressing housing concerns. While advancements have been made, there is still some distance to travel to ensure human rights are fully embedded into its policies and programmes, said Leilani Farha, the UN Special Rapporteur on the right to adequate housing.

Approximately 38 million people live in informal settlements and unplanned areas, and when it comes to improving housing conditions for these people, in situ rehabilitation has been relatively scarce.

Other creative ideas for rehabilitation like the social production of housing have not been sufficiently explored, said the Special Rapporteur in a [statement](#) at the end of a visit to Egypt.

To curb the growth of informal settlements, the Government has embarked on the development of 42 new cities. At times, people are moved far from their previous employment and existing social networks. There have been very limited attempts to engage communities in participatory processes with respect to the design of housing policies and programs, and communities have not been provided with the resources to so engage.

"Egypt, a nation of engineers and architects, has grasped the bricks and mortar solution to its housing problems, but still needs to better understand the value of and the central role that people play in order for the right to housing to be realised," Farha said.

"It appears that Egypt is taking seriously its commitments under Sustainable Development Goal 11. The President himself committed to building one million units and the upgrading of informal settlements and unplanned areas. The Government has created a robust and financially innovative Social Housing Fund that could potentially be a model for other countries."

One of the Special Rapporteur's most distressing findings was the situation of discrimination faced by LGBT with respect to housing. The Rapporteur heard harrowing stories of assault and harassment leading to homelessness or housing insecurity. The Government must acknowledge LGBT as rights holders and ensure equal protection of the right to housing for all.

Many people and organisations defending the right to housing, with whom the Rapporteur spoke, live in a culture of fear. The right to adequate housing cannot be fully implemented if residents are unable to freely assemble and advocate for their rights, the expert said.

"Once Egypt embraces the diversity of its population and their right to participation in the development of their housing policies, the country will be able to fully meet its international human rights obligations with respect to the right to adequate housing," Farha said. The Rapporteur has been assured by the Government that it is working towards this end.

ENDS

Ms 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. Ms 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. Her most recent [report to the General Assembly](#) focusses on rights-based upgrading of informal settlements. Her more comprehensive

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For more information and media **requests** please contact:

During and after the visit: Gunnar Theissen at (+41 22 917 93 21 / gtheissen@ohchr.org) or write to srhousing@ohchr.org

For **media inquiries** related to other UN independent experts:

Jeremy Laurence – Media Unit (+ 41 22 917 9383 / jlaurence@ohchr.org)

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