



## UN housing expert calls for human rights shift in South Korea

[Korean version](#)

SEOUL/GENEVA (23 May 2018) – United Nations expert, Leilani Farha, urged national and local governments of South Korea to shift their approach to housing and homelessness to meet current human rights standards.

Leilani Farha, the UN Special Rapporteur on the right to adequate housing, noted that South Korea now has the world's 11th largest economy, having moved in the last 50 years from being one of the poorest countries to one of the most developed.

"While there has been a massive effort to improve housing conditions for the bulk of its population, Korea still needs to ensure that no one is left behind in its housing policy in order to meet its commitments under Goal 11 of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. This is going to require some major shifts," she said at the end of a [10-day visit](#).

"I am deeply concerned by the continuation of massive reconstruction projects resulting in the destruction of neighbourhoods and displacement of individuals and families," she added.

Farha said that while the Government has started to shift from a bulldozing approach to housing to one that is community centred, its current legal framework for urban redevelopment and reconstruction does not comply with internationally recognised human rights standards and continues to result in forced evictions.

The Special Rapporteur was also alarmed by the unaffordability of housing in metropolitan areas for young people and low-income households.

"Korea is now leading the OECD in terms of household debt and security of tenure is a real issue. I met with residents who are living in completely substandard housing and yet paying exorbitant rents – forced to live in tiny spaces no more than 5 square metres, on short term leases and at the mercy of landlords' arbitrary decisions to raise the rent."

Korea has some distance to go to ensure that human rights protections in housing extend to all vulnerable groups.

As it stands, persons with disabilities remain institutionalised contrary to the Government's obligations under the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. LGBTI people are subject to discrimination in housing and all other aspects of life and not adequately recognised by the Government as a group requiring protection. Foreign migrant workers live in some of the harshest conditions and are denied access to housing and other social benefits as required under international human rights law.

The Special Rapporteur also called on the Government of Korea to shift its policies with respect to people living in grossly inadequate housing, such as the jjokpang and goshiwon units, in order to improve their security of tenure and their housing conditions.

"The shift from housing being treated as a commodity to housing being understood as a human right is not yet complete," she said. "The Government should adopt a comprehensive human rights based national action plan on housing to ensure that the right to housing, as included in the recently adopted Framework Residence Act, is implemented in practice."

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Find the comprehensive end of mission statement at:

<http://www.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=23116&LangID=E>

**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.

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