



States are failing millions mired in housing crisis, says UN expert

GENEVA (4 March 2019) - States cannot put themselves forward as human rights leaders while leaving increasing numbers of residents to live and die on their streets, with no means to hold their Governments accountable and with no access to effective remedies, a UN human rights expert said today.

"The time for excuses, justifications and looking the other way when access to justice is denied for the right to housing has long passed," the Special Rapporteur on the right to housing, Leilani Farha, said in a [report](#) presented to the United Nations Human Rights Council in Geneva. "Rights must have remedies, and Governments must be held accountable to rights holders.

"Rampant evictions of those living in informal settlements and encampments, disregard of court orders and the rule of law and criminalisation of people who are homeless suggest one thing: those whose right to housing has been violated have not been recognised and treated as equal members of the human family," she said.

"As long as States deny access to justice for the right to housing, they perpetuate a hierarchy of human rights, exposing the discriminatory position that some rights (and thus some rights holders) matter more than others."

In the report, Farha suggests that the global housing crisis is rooted in a crisis in access to justice because without access to justice, housing is not properly recognised, understood or addressed as a human right.

"Millions who live in homelessness or unacceptable living conditions have no place where they can claim their right to housing when States have failed to progressively realise the right, imposed forced evictions, or criminalised those living in homelessness or informal housing," she said.

The Special Rapporteur outlined how compliance with the obligation to progressively realise the right to housing should be adjudicated; how forced evictions and criminalisation must be prevented through access to justice and participation in decision-making; how national human rights institutions and informal justice systems should complement the role of courts; and how private actors are required to ensure access to justice not only for direct harms, but also to ensure that investments or development plans are consistent with the realization of the right to housing.

The Special Rapporteur also presented reports on her fact-finding missions to the [Republic of Korea](#) and [Egypt](#).

ENDS

Media advisory: On Saturday, 9 March 2019, the International Film Festival and Forum on Human Rights (FIFDH) in Geneva will screen the rough cut of the documentary "Push" which followed the work of the Special Rapporteur around the globe in her investigations of the financialisation of housing resulting in evictions and gentrification. A panel discussion with the Special Rapporteur; Professor Saskia Sassen; housing rights activists, and film director Fredrik Gertten (Sweden) will follow the screening. The event will start with the signature by the Mayor of Geneva, Mr. Sami Kaanan, of a document pledging that housing will be considered as a human right and not a commodity by the City. For more information: <https://fifdh.org/en/screening/turning-the-right-to-adequate-housing-into-a-reality>

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.

The Special Rapporteurs are part of what is known as the [Special Procedures](#) of the Human Rights Council. Special Procedures, the largest body of independent experts in the UN Human Rights system, is the general name of the Council's independent fact-finding and monitoring mechanisms that address either specific country situations or thematic issues in all parts of the world. Special Procedures' experts work on a voluntary basis; they are not UN staff and do not receive a salary for their work. They are independent from any government or organization and serve in their individual capacity.

For more information and media requests please contact:
Gunnar Theissen (+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)

Tag and share - Twitter: [@adequatehousing](#) and Facebook: [righttohousing](#)

