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Housing inequality defines Chilean landscape – UN Expert says

Housing inequality

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STATEMENTS

[Statement by Ms. Leilani Farha, Special Rapporteur on Adequate Housing as a component of the right to and Adequate standard of living, and on the right to non-discrimination in this context at the 69th session of the General Assembly - Third Committee, Item 68 \(b & c\)](#)

SANTIAGO / GENEVA (28 April 2017) – “Inequality is one of the hallmarks of Chilean society, and this is starkly apparent in the housing situation in the country” underlined the UN Special Rapporteur on the right to adequate housing, Leilani Farha, who today ends a ten-day official visit to the country.

“It is unusual to see a country that has successfully delivered homeownership to such a large number of low and middle income households, who can in turn pass it on to their descendants”, Ms. Farha said. “This secure tenure, however, has come at the expense of essential aspects of housing as a human right: location, quality and habitability, as well as access to transportation and employment opportunities”, the Special Rapporteur highlighted.

The market driven approach to housing for vulnerable groups has contributed to the segregation of people in Chile based on socio-economic status, according to the UN expert. “Traveling to different places in Chile, including to informal settlements, I have witnessed sharp divisions between neighbourhoods, particularly with respect to the type and quality of housing, and the services around them”, she said.

The UN expert said she was shocked by the abandonment by the government of people who are homeless, many of whom have disabilities. This population is basically invisible. They are offered few to no government services and certainly no housing options but for periodic shelter and charitable services.

Ms. Farha was heart-broken to hear of the discrimination faced by migrants, both documented and undocumented, in accessing adequate housing. “I call on the Government of Chile to reform its migration law, including with explicit references to access to housing and to regulation and monitoring of private sector lessors”, she said.

The Special Rapporteur acknowledged that the Government of Chile has

put in place programmes to enhance inclusion and integration as well as a number of innovative pilot programmes addressing distinct housing needs.

“However, without addressing housing as a human right, signalling a shift away from the view that housing is a commodity I fear vulnerable populations in Chile will continue to experience housing inequality which is unacceptable in a country that has indicated its strong commitment to human rights.”

During her ten-day mission to the country, the expert went to Santiago, Valparaiso, Viña del Mar, Temuco, and Antofagasta and met with senior Government officials at national, regional and municipal levels, as well as with residents, civil society and community organisations.

A detailed report of her findings will be presented to the UN Human Rights Council in March 2018.

Ms. Leilani Farha (Canada) 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, Canada. 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. [Learn more:](#)

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.

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