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Mandate of the Special Rapporteur on the right to adequate housing

Questionnaire for National Human Rights Institutions, UN agencies and civil society organisations in general

For her next report to the Human Rights Council, 31st session- March 2016-, the 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 regard, Ms Leilani Farha, intends to focus on the intimate link between homelessness and the enjoyment of the right to adequate housing, as well as virtually all other human rights, including the right to life and non-discrimination.

Homelessness has emerged as a global human rights crisis even in States where there are adequate resources to address it. It has, however, been largely insulated from human rights accountability and rarely addressed as a human rights violation requiring positive measures to eliminate and to prevent its recurrence. While strategies to address homelessness have become more prevalent in recent years, most have failed to address homelessness as a human rights violation and few have provided for effective monitoring, enforcement or remedies.

The report will explore how homelessness is understood and manifests in diverse social, cultural, economic and even linguistic contexts. It will consider homelessness both as serious deprivation of access to housing and as an extreme form of social exclusion, discrimination and loss of dignity. It will seek to identify and understand less visible experiences of homelessness, particularly among women.

In this context, the Special Rapporteur would like to receive contributions and views **from national human rights institutions, non-governmental organisations and networks, UN agencies, academic institutions or other relevant stakeholders**. Answers to any of the following questions which are relevant to the mandate or work of your organization/institution would greatly assist the Special Rapporteur in developing her thematic report and fashioning follow up strategies to address and ultimately eliminate homelessness. Please feel free to limit responses to particular areas or priorities and to provide other information that you consider important.

1. Please explain how your organisation or institution defines homelessness in various contexts, for example, when measuring the extent of homelessness or conducting research about it, or preparing proposals and advocacy projects. Please explain why the definition was chosen. Do these definitions differ from those used by your government? Please provide any available data on the extent of homelessness in general and among particular groups in your country and identify any limitations to this data.
2. What population groups are most affected by homelessness in your country/ in your organization's area of work? Please provide any information you have about the extent or experiences of homelessness among particular groups such as children and youth, women, indigenous peoples, persons with disabilities, and others. If relevant studies exist please indicate or share a link, a reference or a copy.
3. In your organization's view, what are the primary systemic and structural causes of homelessness? How is your organization addressing these and how should these be addressed by Governments?

4. Please provide any information available about discrimination and stigmatization of people who are homeless, including laws or policies that may be used to remove homeless persons from public spaces or to prohibit activities in public spaces such as sleeping, camping, eating, sitting, or asking for money. Please explain whether such discrimination is prohibited by law at national and/or local levels and describe any initiatives being taken or proposed to address this problem.
5. Please indicate if you know whether homelessness has been recognized as a human rights violation by courts, by national human rights institutions in your country/ in the area of your expertise, and if so, on the basis of which human rights (for example: right to adequate housing, right to life, etc) Provide information on any initiatives being taken by your organization or others to address homelessness using an explicit human rights framework.
6. Please provide information on how your organization has used or intends to use administrative procedures to challenge homelessness as a violation of human rights?
7. Please provide information about any proposed or existing strategies or legislation that your organisation or institution might be familiar with aimed at reducing or eliminating homelessness. Explain any goals or timelines that have been adopted for this purpose, describe how progress has been monitored, describe how those affected by homelessness have been involved and provide information on results to date. Does your institution/organization have any suggestions for how existing or proposed strategies could be improved?

The Special Rapporteur is particularly interested in receiving any available testimonial or visual documentation of the experiences of homelessness and the struggles of homeless people for justice. Please indicate whether this type of information or images can be made public by the Special Rapporteur, and if homeless persons in pictures, videos, etc. have given their consent for the use of their images.

Submission of responses and other materials

Kindly, please identify links or provide copies of any law, regulation, policy or other document related to your answers. Due to limited capacity for translation, we kindly request that you submit your answers, if possible, **in English, Spanish or French and, no later than 28 October, 2015. All responses will be posted in the web page of the Rapporteur unless you indicate otherwise.** Please keep your responses to a maximum of 6 pages (or 3,000 words). Kindly send your responses preferably via email to: srhousing@ohchr.org, copying registry@ohchr.org; or to:

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For any question, please contact the Special Rapporteur through her assistant, Ms. Juana Sotomayor, Special Procedures Branch- OHCHR: email: jsotomayor@ohchr.org; phone: +41 22 917 94 45.