



# UNITED NATIONS

Press Release

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**Forced evictions in the name of development  
cause  
homelessness, displacement and human  
tragedy  
world wide, UN human right expert states to  
the World Urban Forum**

20 June 2006

*The Special Rapporteur on adequate housing as a component of the right to an adequate standard of living, Miloon Kothari, is speaking today before the third session of the World Urban Forum (19-23 June 2006) in Vancouver and has issued the following press release.*

"The World Urban Forum III gives us the opportunity to reflect on the challenges facing the world community as it grapples with the global housing and living conditions crisis. These challenges also need to be tackled in the context of realization of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) which should serve to focus worldwide efforts in overcoming the critical deficiencies in global development.

One of the main priorities that should emerge from the World Urban Forum III is the urgent need for States to halt the practice of forced evictions and displacement. Since my appointment as Special Rapporteur on adequate housing, I have witnessed and increasingly received reports on forced evictions and displacement around the world. Many contemporary cases of forced evictions, those without due process or the provision of, and access to, appropriate forms of legal or other protection, constitute a gross violation of human rights and indicate a systematic disregard of recognized human rights standards on the part of States. Forced evictions and displacement occur due to different reasons. They are taking place in countries world wide, ranging from democratic to authoritarian states. Many are so-called development-based evictions, which include evictions often planned or conducted with the justification or under the pretext of serving the 'public good', such as those linked to slum-clearance drives, large-scale infrastructure or other development projects, or through the abuse by States of the doctrine of 'eminent domain'.

Figures show that annually there are more people displaced and forced into homelessness and inadequate housing living conditions due to development projects than due to armed and ethnic conflict. And yet, such forced evictions, prima facie violations of a range of recognized human rights, continue to take place with impunity and rare, if any, reaction by the

international community.

Above all, the impact on those affected can often be characterized as a human tragedy. In the wake of forced evictions, people are often left homeless and destitute, without means of earning a livelihood and, in practice, with no effective access to legal or other remedies. As a general rule, forced evictions affect the poorest, the socially and economically most vulnerable and marginalized sectors of society and intensify inequality and social conflict, contributing to segregation, ghettoisation and the creation of apartheid cities and rural settlements. Cases from Zimbabwe, Pakistan, India, Cambodia, Nigeria, Philippines, Canada, United States of America, Morocco, Russian Federation and Iran all illustrate the scale and global reach of this perhaps the most devastating violation of the right to adequate housing.

Most of these 'development-based' evictions have one or several common features that contravene recognized human rights standards. The current large-scale eviction drives around the world make a mockery of agreed MDG's and other internationally agreed targets, goals and commitments, including those detailed in the Habitat Agenda. I call on all actors at the World Urban Forum to unequivocally oppose forced evictions as a means of achieving 'development'. I urge UN-Habitat, OHCHR, the newly formed UN Human Rights Council and other international bodies to play a larger role in holding States accountable for continuing to carry out forced evictions. I urge the world's governments to abide by their international human rights commitments to uphold the human right to adequate housing especially for the millions that continue to be forced to live in inadequate and insecure housing and living conditions."

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*The Special Rapporteur's statement to the World Urban Forum III, which elaborates on the points made in this press release, is attached.*

*The Special Rapporteur's latest report, including the "Basic principles and guidelines on development-based evictions and displacement" (E/CN.4/2006/41), can be found at:*

<http://www.ohchr.org/english/issues/housing/annual.htm>

*For more information on the mandate and work of the Special Rapporteur, including recent public statements on forced evictions, please consult the website of the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights at*

<http://www.ohchr.org/english/issues/housing/index.htm>