

**PEOPLE LIVING IN HOMELESSNESS DEMAND GOVERNMENTS FULFILL
THEIR RIGHT TO HOUSING**
Global Homelessness Action amplifies their voices on Human Rights Day



(Photo Credit: The Shift)

(December 7, 2020 – OTTAWA) Today The Shift launched a Global Homelessness Action, an international digital campaign that features individuals living in homelessness around the world directly addressing governments and claiming their right to housing on Human Rights Day, December 10, 2020.

Convened by The Shift, the Global Homelessness Action brings together more than 30 organizations and hundreds of advocates from 20 different countries to support the human rights of people living in homelessness whose safety and precarity has been additionally jeopardized by Covid-19. Together, they have issued a [Call to Action](#) to hundreds of government officials in over 150 countries demanding they take urgent measures to eliminate homelessness in line with their obligations under international human rights law.

The Global Homelessness Action is hosted on The Shift's [website](#) comprised of video, audio, and written testimonies from people living in encampments and on streets around the world who are struggling to survive in the midst of a global pandemic where access to clean water, toilets, and shelter can mean the difference between life and death.

Despite having committed to international human rights treaties that affirm access to adequate housing is a fundamental human right, many governments fail to fully implement the right to housing and related rights. Statements submitted to the Global Homelessness Action from people in Africa, Asia, Europe, and North and South America voice frustrations with governments' inability to address homelessness for what it is — a global crisis — and to take measures to eliminate it in an urgent and timely manner:

- “Safe housing, healthy environments, and healthy living is not a privilege. When are you going to provide us the rights of a human being?”
– Pepper (Skid Row, Los Angeles, USA)
- “I demand that the government please help us because we are dying. Housing is not a whim; it is a human right. The street is not a place to live, much less die.”
– Cristian (Buenos Aires, Argentina)

- "I hope we will be given the right to housing, to be treated as rightfully and humanly as people."
– Rosemary (Seoul, South Korea)

As of today, more than 150 million people around the world are living in homelessness. "COVID-19 has exacerbated the housing crisis and revealed it for what it is: a human rights calamity, decades in the making. Never before has access to safe, adequate housing been such a stark matter of life or death," says Leilani Farha, Global Director of The Shift. "People living in homelessness rarely have spaces to claim their rights and to be heard. The Global Homelessness Action is intended to begin to address this by providing a platform for their human rights claims directed at governments to secure and uphold the right to housing."

The Call to Action issued to governments by The Shift and organizations participating in the initiative brings these human rights claims to the fore. People from around the world are being encouraged to hold their public officials accountable to their legal human rights obligations and support these claims by participating in a digital letter campaign that will send signed electronic copies of the Call to Action to their respective governments.

The full action can be found [here](#); it includes the following demands:

1. **Engage people living in homelessness** as rights holders and experts in their own lives, not as criminals or beneficiaries of charity. Guarantee meaningful consultation with these experts when developing laws, policies, and programs that affect them. Recovery from the pandemic depends upon the participation of people with lived experience of homelessness.
2. **Immediately provide adequate accommodation** to all people living 'rough' or on the streets, ensuring access to water, sanitation, food, social supports, and health services during the pandemic and beyond.
3. **Place people living in homelessness at the forefront of all COVID-19 economic recovery plans** by recognizing them as a protected and priority group in all areas of action. **Stop criminalizing people living on the streets** and activities necessary for their human survival.
4. Ensure people living in homelessness have **access to free legal information, advice, and remedies** regarding violations of their right to housing and other human rights.

HOW YOU CAN HELP

Starting December 10, people from around the world are invited to join the Global Homelessness Action and hold governments accountable by sending an electronic copy of the Call to Action to their government officials.

The digital letter campaign is hosted on ActionNetwork.Org, a platform that empowers individuals to organize for progressive causes. By entering their zip code or postal code, participants can identify their local and national housing officials and issue signed letters to their respective offices. The campaign will run through December 22, 2020. For more information or to participate, visit <https://www.make-the-shift.org/homelessnessaction/>.

ABOUT THE SHIFT

Housing is a human right, not a privilege for the few or a commodity for multiplying corporate profits. [The Shift](#) is a global initiative dedicated to securing the right to housing that advocates for governments to uphold and implement human rights commitments and dismantle the financialization of housing. Cofounded by Leilani Farha, the former UN Special Rapporteur on the Right to Housing, with the UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights and United Cities and Local Governments (UCLG), a global umbrella group representing 250,000 local and regional governments, our organization provokes action to end homelessness, unaffordability, and evictions globally.

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