



UN HABITAT

# The Right to Adequate Housing



Human Rights

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(Rev. 1)





Office of the United Nations  
High Commissioner  
for Human Rights

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## NOTE

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## CONTENTS

	<i>Page</i>
Abbreviations .....	iv
Introduction .....	1
I. WHAT IS THE RIGHT TO ADEQUATE HOUSING? .....	3
A. Key aspects of the right to adequate housing .....	3
B. Common misconceptions about the right to adequate housing .....	6
C. The link between the right to adequate housing and other human rights .....	9
D. How does the principle of non-discrimination apply ? ....	10
E. The right to adequate housing in international human rights law .....	10
II. HOW DOES THE RIGHT TO ADEQUATE HOUSING APPLY TO SPECIFIC GROUPS? .....	16
A. Women .....	16
B. Children .....	18
C. Slum-dwellers .....	20
D. Homeless persons .....	21
E. Persons with disabilities .....	23
F. Displaced persons and migrants .....	24
G. Indigenous peoples .....	27
III. WHAR ARE THE OBLIGATIONS ON STATES AND THE RESPONSIBILITIES OF OTHERS? .....	29
A. General obligations .....	30
B. Three types of obligations .....	33
C. The responsibilities of others .....	34

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IV. MONITORING THE RIGHT TO ADEQUATE HOUSING AND HOLDING STATES ACCOUNTABLE .....	37
A. National accountability and monitoring .....	37
B. Regional accountability .....	42
C. International monitoring .....	43
<i>Annex: Selected international instruments and other documents related to the right to adequate housing .....</i>	<i>47</i>

## **ABBREVIATIONS**

IDPs	internally displaced persons
ILO	International Labour Organization
NGOs	non-governmental organizations
NHRI	national human rights institution
OHCHR	Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights
UN-Habitat	United Nations Human Settlement Programme
UNHRP	United Nations Housing Rights Programme
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund

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## Introduction

International human rights law recognizes everyone's right to an adequate standard of living, including adequate housing. Despite the central place of this right within the global legal system, well over a billion people are not adequately housed. Millions around the world live in life- or health-threatening conditions, in overcrowded slums and informal settlements, or in other conditions which do not uphold their human rights and their dignity. Further millions are forcibly evicted, or threatened with forced eviction, from their homes every year.

Adequate housing was recognized as part of the right to an adequate standard of living in the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights and in the 1966 International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights. Other international human rights treaties have since recognized or referred to the right to adequate housing or some elements of it, such as the protection of one's home and privacy.

The right to adequate housing is relevant to all States, as they have all ratified at least one international treaty referring to adequate housing and committed themselves to protecting the right to adequate housing through international declarations, plans of action or conference outcome documents. Several constitutions protect the right to adequate housing or outline the State's general responsibility to ensure adequate housing and living conditions for all. Courts from various legal systems have also adjudicated cases related to its enjoyment, covering, for instance, forced evictions, tenant protection, discrimination in the housing sphere or access to basic housing-related services.

Increased international attention has also been paid to the right to adequate housing, including by human rights treaty bodies, regional human rights mechanisms and the Commission on Human Rights (now replaced by the Human Rights Council), which created the mandate of "Special Rapporteur on adequate housing as a component of the right to an adequate standard of living" in 2000. These initiatives have helped to clarify the scope and content of the right to adequate housing.

This Fact Sheet starts by explaining what the right to adequate housing is, illustrates what it means for specific individuals and groups, and then elaborates upon States' related obligations. It concludes with an overview of national, regional and international accountability and monitoring mechanisms.

This joint OHCHR/UN-Habitat Fact Sheet is the second in a series of joint publications by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights with other United Nations partners to focus on economic, social and cultural rights. The first was the *Fact Sheet on the Right to Health*, issued jointly with the World Health Organization, and a joint fact sheet with the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations on the right to food is forthcoming.

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