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UN Expert to Report on Affordable Housing Crisis in US

NEW YORK - As part of the current session of the UN Human Rights Council in Geneva, Switzerland, on Friday, March 5, Raquel Rolnik, the UN Special Rapporteur on the Right to Adequate Housing, will present the official report of her office's recent U.S. mission. The report, entitled: "[Promotion and Protection of All Human Rights, Civil, Political, Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights Including the Right to Development](#)," highlights the Special Rapporteur's findings on the mission and her recommendations to the U.S. government.

In partnership with community groups, the U.S. mission was coordinated by the [National Economic and Social Rights Initiative](#) (NESRI) and the [National Law Center on Homelessness and Poverty](#). During her visit, which took place from October 22nd to November 8th, 2009, the Special Rapporteur visited six cities and focused on the foreclosure crisis, growing homelessness, and the severe lack of affordable housing, including the demolition of public housing and the under-funding of Section 8 based housing.

The Special Rapporteur's final recommendations to the U.S. government include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Imposing a moratorium on the demolition and disposition of public housing until one-for-one replacement can be guaranteed;
- Including the Right to First Purchase for Section 8 buildings in the Preservation Bill;
- Extending the Protecting Tenants At Foreclosure Act beyond 2012;
- Developing alternatives to the criminalization of the homeless, e.g., where adequate shelter is not available, allowing homeless persons to shelter themselves in public areas;
- Ensuring that poor communities are not displaced as development takes place, with respect to the Choice Neighborhoods program; and
- Making empty and foreclosed properties available for sale to non-profit organizations and community land trusts.

In commenting on the significance of the final report, Tiffany M. Gardner, Director of NESRI's Human Right to Housing Program, stated: "The Special Rapporteur's final report highlights the myriad of housing issues local and community groups have been trying to highlight to government officials for many years. Hopefully this international attention will inspire meaningful dialogue towards workable solutions between our government and those communities that are directly impacted by these issues."

Since the visit, national advocacy around these issues has continued. For example, NESRI and community partners across the country are producing a documentary on the U.S. mission. A trailer of the documentary, which will be previewed tomorrow at the UN in Geneva, will highlight the site visits conducted by the Special Rapporteur during the mission and will

underscore the work of local community groups in combating the housing crisis and building the national human right to housing movement.

Reflecting on the ongoing impact of the mission, Becky Dennison from [Los Angeles Community Action Network](#) explained: “Most organizations and members who planned and participated in the Special Rapporteur’s visit continue to work together to promote and demand the right to housing in Los Angeles. In December 2009, on International Human Rights Day, more than 250 residents that were truly reflective of multi-cultural Los Angeles took to the streets to bring light to domestic human rights violations.”

Notes to editors

1. The Special Rapporteur’s presentation to the UN Human Rights Council will take place within the window of 1 – 3 pm Geneva time (7 – 9 am EST) on Friday, March 5, at the "Palais des Nations" (UN main building in Geneva), room XX. The session will be webcast live at <http://www.un.org/webcast/unhrc/index.asp> and archived about one hour after the end of the meetings.
2. View a link to Special Rapporteur’s official final report at http://www2.ohchr.org/english/bodies/hrcouncil/docs/13session/A.HRC.13.20.ADD.4_AEV.pdf
3. View a short video statement by the Special Rapporteur at the conclusion of her US mission in November 2009 at <http://www.vimeo.com/9920589>
4. A trailer of a documentary about the UN Special Rapporteur’s Mission to the US will be screened at a side event on March 5 entitled “The Housing Rights Situation in the US.” The event will take place at Palais des Nations, Room XXVII, at 4 pm Geneva time (10 am EST). Speaking will be Special Rapporteur Raquel Rolnik and Salih Booker, Executive Director, [Centre on Housing Rights and Evictions](#) (COHRE). The event is organized by the National Economic and Social Rights Initiative and COHRE. The trailer will be available online tomorrow at <http://www.nesri.org>.
5. In addition to the trailer screening on March 5 in Geneva, the documentary will be screened in full-length during the week of April 12th at town hall meetings across the US. The town hall meetings, marking the release of the report, will be organized by local groups that participated in the mission and are members of the [Campaign to Restore National Housing Rights](#). The documentary will also be provided to U.S. government officials. More information about the Campaign to Restore National Housing Rights and the April screenings will be available shortly at <http://restorehousingrights.org>.