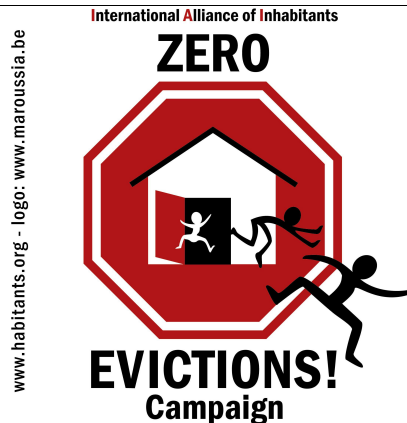


# INTERNATIONAL ALLIANCE OF INHABITANTS

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## Zero Evictions Campaign : international solidarity to achieve dignity and security in housing

At this very moment, a billion people all over the world are either threatened with homelessness or living in bad housing conditions, due to large-scale investments of financial and real estate capital, social, economic and racial discrimination, wars and natural disasters. Instead of diminishing by 100 million by 2020 as laid down by Objective No. 7 of the Millennium Development Goals, this figure is destined to rise by another 700 million by 2020. The main cause is the subjectation of the urban question to the neo-liberal dictates of the IMF and the World Bank which impose privatizations in the public service sector and cuts in social policies.

To tackle this dramatic situation, the International Alliance of Inhabitants launched the Zero Evictions Campaign at the 4<sup>th</sup> World Social Forum (Mumbai, January 2004), to mobilize international solidarity, starting from the inhabitants directly concerned, in order to restore their hope of achieving dignity and security in housing.

The aim is to secure housing rights for all; no one should be evicted. If tenants have to be transferred, decent, secure alternative accommodation should be found in advance and with the agreement of the inhabitants concerned. This means respecting Article 11 of International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, with particular reference to General Comment No. 4 of the UN Committee on Rights (1990).

To achieve this objective, the IAI has proposed the setting up of a common global space for all urban social movements in order to unify local, national and international initiatives. At the same time, it has invited the NGOs, networks involved in housing rights, and UN institutions to give the campaign their backing.

This is also the basis of the IAI representatives' activities on the UN-Advisory Group on Forced Evictions (AGFE).



### How ?

The Zero Evictions Campaign operates on several levels depending on the adhesion and mobilization of the local organizations concerned and the gravity of the situation:

- An international alert system with local "antennae" for violations of housing rights
- Appeals for international solidarity
- Proposals for exploratory missions and conciliation by the UN-AGFE
- Support for the exchange of experience of good practices by inhabitants' organizations, local bodies, and other subjects for avoiding evictions
- Support for the drafting and monitoring of local, national, and international plans of action for security of housing tenure.

### Where ?

At present, the Zero Evictions Campaign is active in:

**Nairobi (Kenya)** : 300,000 people are threatened with forced eviction due to infrastructure investments (motorways, railways, electricity lines). The **W Nairobi W! Campaign** has developed at both the local (mobilization, judicial appeals, meetings) and the international levels (thanks to a special web site, approx. 10,000 e-mails have been sent to all the institutions involved). The campaign was successful in stopping the forced evictions. The debate has now been opened on land reform and housing security which should be financed by a People's Fund for the right to Land and Housing, where the resources of part of Kenya's cancelled foreign debt should be channelled. Negotiations have also been opened in order to mobilize 45 million euros, freed up thanks to the conversion of Kenya's external debt owed to Italy, to test out the Fund on two shanty towns.

**Zimbabwe :** In 2005, 700 000 people were evicted during « Operation Murambatsvina » (« throw out the trash ») launched by the government of Zimbabwe, but in reality, over 2.5 million out of 12.5 million inhabitants, including 300 000 children forced to leave school, were affected by this operation. Local mobilization, sustained at the international level by the **Operation to re-establish housing rights in Zimbabwe** have requested a halt in demolitions and evictions, and to establish a plan for improving conditions in the slums in agreement with the communities involved, as well as to cancel the foreign debt so that the resulting resources can be channeled towards the People's Fund for the Right to Land and Housing. These initiatives have forced the international community to wonder about president Mugabe, the historical anti-colonialist leader, and send a United Nations envoy, to investigate the evictions.

**Nigeria :** At the end of 2005, President Obasanjo led one of the most vicious and massive eviction operations ever : more than 4 million people out of 7 million were threatened with eviction so that he could carry out his master plan for the capital city of Abuja. Furthermore, over 20.000 tenants of public housing projects in Lagos were threatened with eviction as part of the continuing campaign led by the Housing and Defense Ministries, who have decided to privatize the sector. Dozens of local associations and churches have responded the **Break the Silence on evictions : defend housing rights in Nigeria !** appeal launched by the « Nigerian Coalition for Zero Evictions », which has demanded a halt in demolitions and expulsions, compensation and immediate alternative accommodations for the homeless, and condemnation of the privatization efforts and master plan for Abuja. This appeal has also requested the block of all foreign investments which ultimately result in the violation of human rights and that the funds resulting from the annulment of the country's foreign debt be channeled towards the People's Fund for the Right to Land and Housing.

**Dominican Republic :** 1 million people are threatened with forced eviction because of building speculation on the land where they live without good title. The campaign, which was launched on World Zero Evictions Day 2004, involved grass-roots organizations and the local government of S. Domingo; it is also supported by the government of the Basque countries. The campaign succeeded in stopping part of the evictions and helped to set up a table for dialogue and concerted action. Here again there are discussions about establishing a People's Fund for the right to Land and Housing and a Habitat-coop has been created to offer valid alternatives. The UN-AGFE has organized an exploratory and conciliatory mission (March 2005) , but the violent evictions are continuing to be carried out, at times by paramilitary groups. For this reason, we intend to increase pressure by opening other fronts, including promoting the boycott of the tourist organizations implicated in the deal. To be highlighted: the setting up of a coordination programme for the Zero Evictions Campaign in Latin America and the Caribbean at Coopohabitat.

**Italy :** 600,000 people are under threat of forced eviction due to rent arrears or contract termination and the privatization of the public housing sector. The campaign has taken the form of resistance to evictions, important street protests, parliamentary initiatives, and the presentation of a dossier to the United Nations. Because of the campaign, the UN Committee on Rights has delivered a severe reprimand to the Government, while the UN-AGFE has set up an exploratory mission, the first in a G7 state (February 2005), resulting in the signing of a protocol in which the City of Rome has been declared "and eviction-free city". On the other hand, mayors and presidents of many municipalities have requisitioned un-rented apartments. In January 2007 a partial moratorium on evictions was obtained. The fight continues.

**France :** 500,000 people are under threat of forced eviction mainly due to rent arrears. The campaign has included resistance, occupation of empty properties and contesting the demolition of the HLM (public sector housing). Some municipalities have declared their territories "eviction free" by decree. The campaign has forced the government to introduce rules for changing part of the eviction orders into new contracts, backing the approval of a plan for 500,000 public sector houses in 5 years. The fires in many unsafe buildings in Paris, which caused dozens of victims during the summer of 2005, have underlined the need to continue mobilization at various levels. After the winter truce, the violent evictions have begun again, and consequently so have the protests.

**Croatia :** After the dissolution of Yugoslavia in 1996, a law dating back to 1945, in which private lodgings could be perpetually inhabited and subsequently passed down to one's heirs, was abolished by new legislation which eliminated that right. A wave of violent evictions affecting above all the poor and elderly citizens, followed the decree of the Constitutional Court which abolished the obligation to supply adequate alternative housing. The Alliance of Tenants' Unions and dozens of associations and political parties launched the "**Campaign to Restore Tenants' Rights to Security of Tenure**", requesting a halt to these evictions and the abrogation of the norms which are not in line with international treaties, so as to defend these citizens' human and housing rights.. The On-line appeal, asking that international organizations apply pressure on the Croatia Government, especially now that this country is negotiating its entry into the European Union has been signed by thousands of people so far. Appel en ligne qui a recueilli des milliers de signatures, demande aussi aux organismes internationaux de faire pression, notamment au moment où la Croatie est en train de négocier son entrée dans l'Union européenne.

**Dale Farm, Basildon (Britain) :** This is the largest nomadic community in the United Kingdom, which has been housed in well-kept single and mobile homes rising on land owned by that same community, which used to be a dump for broken down cars. This independent community in which Gammon, a language with pre-celtic roots, is spoken has been threatened with "ethnic cleansing" by the Departmental Council of Basildon, which has in fact decided to destroy a great number of homes as a consequence of a particularly vicious campaign of the Tories against the Gypsies.

The **Red Wheels in the UK Zero Evictions Campaign**, supported by dozens of organizations and public figures, including Vanessa Redgrave, has demanded a halt in the evictions and has asked the government of the United Kingdom to establish an investigative committee and to abrogate the local norms which violate international treaties on human and housing rights.

**Tamil Nadu, India:** PASUMAI THAAYAGAM (Green Mother Land) has reported that a demolition drive by authorities has made around 30,000 people homeless in Chennai, Tamil Nadu, India, including around 5,000 students.

The people who were living in the Porur Lake area were forcefully evicted without any prior notification or announcement. Between 23 and 25 of November 2006 police personnel arrived in large number with earth movers and bulldozers to demolish all the settlements. It was particularly shocking for these people that such a thing could happen when all government officials had promised them full facilities and when the area had already been provided with a full electricity supply, a sub post office, and public call offices.

On December 2, 2006, the State Government formed panels at the State and district level to initiate time-bound action for removal of encroachments on Government land. So, about one million people are threatened by evictions waiting to happen all over the state of Tamil Nadu.

In this context, are launching a 'Campaign for Housing Rights and Zero Eviction' in Tamil Nadu, India.

**The IAI has also sent messages of anti-eviction solidarity to:** Lima (Peru), New Delhi (India), Karachi (Pakistan), Cebu and Manila (Philippines), Beijing (China), Quilombo, São Paulo, Curitiba and Porto Alegre (Brazil), Occupied Territory (Palestine), Nagoya (Japan), Bishkek (Kyrgyzstan), Barcelona and Seville (Spain), Hungary, Milan and Bologna (Italy), Port Said (Egypt, New Orleans (United States), Paraguay and Sochi (Russian Federation).

## The Proposal of the Fund for the Right to Land and Housing



Forced evictions are often the result of large-scale investment, financed by rich countries, the IMF, the World Bank, in roads, railways, business centers, tourism, shopping malls, etc. in poor countries. Rarely is it a matter of providing the prime necessities for the local population; it is more a means of paying off the foreign debt. In almost all cases, the governments of the poor countries refuse to negotiate with inhabitants' organizations to re-house the people concerned with their agreement. They claim not to have the necessary resources. In fact, those resources go to pay off the foreign debt.

We consider the foreign debt to be illegitimate, unfair and unpayable, whereas governments are obliged to pay the social debt. For this reason, at the American Social Forum (July 2004) the IAI presented to the anti-debt movement and Via Campesina a proposal to set up People's Fund for the right to Land and Housing.

These are funds, controlled by inhabitants' organizations and local authorities, into which resources of the cancelled foreign debt, in particular, would be channeled to finance public urban and housing policies.

The proposal was accepted by the Assembly of Urban Social Movements at the WSF 2005 and is now on the agenda of the movement for the cancellation of the debt by the G 8 (Edinburgh, July 2005). Recently in the light of the failure of the Millennium Objective, UN Habitat, several governments and the Parliamentary Assembly for the Habitat have approved this proposal.

Initial result: the conversion of the debt Kenya owes to Italy, with a major portion of the funds being allocated to improving two Nairobi shanty towns.

## The proposal for « eviction-free zones »

Local authorities are in the front line in coping with the negative consequences of forced evictions; often they have neither the legal nor financial tools to provide a satisfactory response for those affected.

In the belief that violations of Article 11 of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights must be remedied, even if it means coming up against national law, in 2004 thirty or so French movements local authorities, co-ordinated by Bobigny municipality, declared their territories "eviction-free zones". This triggered off harsh conflict with the central state powers, but, at the same time, has given anti-eviction movements institutional backing, enabling them to get some results.

Despite the suspension of the order by administrative tribunals, the mayors continued their support with other initiatives, for example a successful campaign against cutting off the water supply of those in arrears. In 2005 and 2006 a series of new anti evictions ordinances have been issued.

The proposal for "eviction-free zones" has also been approved in Italy, and Rome was the first city to be declared a " zero eviction zone".



## Against privatization, for improving public services



The current wave of neo-liberalism is pushing for the privatizations of public services (water, energy, communications) and, in particular, the social housing sector, which is considered the new frontier for profit.

In Africa, Asia and Latin America an offensive has been launched, headed by the IMF and the World Bank, to impose privatizations as a pre-condition for the concession of loans, in order to place the financial capital freed by the collapse of the stock market.

If the European Union were to approve the Bolkestein Directive (March-July 2005) on the liberalization of services, approx. 18 million families presently living in public sector housing would find themselves in a privatized regime. In the United States, the social housing sector cuts, made to pay for the cost of the war, will jeopardize the security of tenure of the working classes.

In former communist countries, including the Russian Federation, reforms in this sector will introduce tenants for the first time to the drama of forced evictions.

There is a close connection between privatizations and the loss of housing tenure security, which is perceived by inhabitants' organizations in various countries. This why they are organizing initiatives at local and national levels to fight it.

It is a matter of opposing policies determined by neo-liberal globalization, and the IAI is promoting within the Social Forums the establishment of committees for each continent to combat privatizations and re-launch the building of public housing.

**YOU TOO COULD BE PART OF THE INTERNATIONAL SOLIDARITY NETWORK  
FOR SECURITY OF HOUSING TENURE!**

**YOUR CITY COULD BECOME AN EVICTION-FREE ZONE!**

**SET UP PEOPLE'S FUND FOR THE RIGHT TO LAND AND HOUSING!**

**FIGHT THE PRIVATIZATION OF PUBLIC SERVICES!**

**SUPPORT THE ZERO EVICTIONS CAMPAIGN!**

Informations : [www.habitants.org](http://www.habitants.org)

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