

The right to adequate housing IS the right to live in peace, security and dignity

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**"We must challenge those with huge wealth and the power that comes with that. We must challenge the dominant understanding of who counts and who doesn't. We must ask who housing is for." - Presentation to ESCR-Net General Assembly, Buenos Aires, Nov 2016**



Leilani Farha (Enric Vives-Rubio)

## The Right to Housing in 2016

December 2016 marked the 50th anniversary of two essential human rights instruments - the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights. While some progress was made with regards to the right to housing, it was not a banner year for rights.

Much of 2016 involved preparations for Habitat 3 and the adoption of the New Urban Agenda in Quito, Ecuador in October. The right to housing was indeed present in the final version, but many advocates and stakeholders were left wondering whether human rights would play the fundamental role in guiding development that they should.

In the shadows of this event were several international crises that demonstrated the need for greater emphasis on the right to housing and economic and social rights more generally. Mass displacement due to conflict and natural disasters, millions of refugees and economic migrants searching for a better life, stories of forced eviction in the name of development, and struggles of

## Connect with the Special Rapporteur

"Only once housing is understood as a human right and reflected as such in both policy and law will we make real and significant change."

Connect with Leilani on Twitter ([@leilanifarha](#) and [@adequatehousing](#)), [Facebook](#), and [Instagram](#).



### How We Live

Instead of a focus on one experience, this

homelessness from all corners of the world made strong headlines throughout the year. Billions of rights holders waiting for their rights to be upheld - over a billion reasons for greater human rights protection.

Armed with global commitments and the understanding that nothing less than a paradigmatic shift in thinking about housing can change the course we are on, let 2017 be the year in which all stakeholders commit to 'do' rights differently. As we said in Quito, let's [#maketheshift](#).



*Leilani & fellow SR Léo Heller on mission in Portugal (December)*

### Country Mission: Portugal

In early December, Leilani travelled to Portugal on an official joint mission with fellow Special Rapporteur Léo Heller, to study the current status of the human right to housing as well as safe drinking water and sanitation.

The independent experts found that while the government had made progress in both the areas of housing and access to water, a legacy of austerity following the economic crisis years ago had not only hurt the most vulnerable, but also pushed more people into poverty. Living conditions for some of the most vulnerable were deplorable - no access to water or electricity, unaffordable housing and homelessness. "In a country like Portugal, this is hard to accept", the experts noted at their final [press conference](#).

Concluding a 10-day trip, the Special Rapporteurs commended government leadership on economic and social rights internationally and called for domestic legislation based in human

time we want to share the testimonials of people from around the world on how they view their [#righttohousing](#) and most importantly, their sense of home.



### REPORT RE-CAP

*A snapshot of Leilani's two reports submitted to the UN in 2016*

UN Human Rights Council (March 2016): At the 31st session of the HRC, Leilani presented her report on homelessness and the responsibility of states to respond urgently to this egregious human rights crisis.

UN General Assembly (October 2016): Leilani presented her second report of the year to the 71st session of the UNGA with a focus on the indivisibility of the right to life and right to housing.

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rights to support adequate housing & access to water and sanitation. See their full [press statement](#) for more information.

Leilani will present her final report in March, and Léo will present his report in September.



*The aftermath - hours after the evictions (Andrew Maki, [Justice & Empowerment Initiatives](#))*

### **'Brutal' evictions in the Otodo Gbame community in Nigeria requires answers**

In November, 30,000 people were forcibly evicted from their homes in Lagos State, Nigeria and are now essentially homeless. Residents of the Otodo Gbame waterfront community reported an extreme use of force as well as fire during the eviction process and have stated that they were not given adequate notice or alternative accommodation, as is required by international law. Most of the people affected lived in poor fishing communities and say they have lost their livelihoods and food sources as well as their homes and possessions. Four people were said to have died.

Questioning the brutality of the evictions and methods used, Leilani sent an urgent communication to the Government of Nigeria concerning this incident and requesting an immediate response to the allegations of human rights abuses.

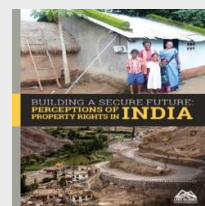
The eviction was [documented](#) by activists and community members and remains an on-going issue. The Nigerian government has yet to respond to Leilani's communication.

To see all of Leilani's communications to government's that are public go [here](#).

## **Leilani's next newsletter.**

### **HOUSING NEWS FROM AROUND THE WORLD**

*Two new reports shed  
light on human rights  
in India & South Africa*



(Source: [PRIndex](#))

A new survey by the [Global Property Rights Index](#), "Building a Secure Future: Perceptions of Property Rights in India," shows that security of tenure and property rights weigh heavily on the minds of many Indians.



(Twitter:  
[@SERI\\_RightsSA](#))

The Socio-Economic Rights Institute of South Africa recently released a report examining the location of housing in relation to

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## Media Round-Up

**Dec 29:** Leilani posted a reflective Op-Ed in The Guardian (UK) on how housing has become more of a commodity than a social good, "[So long, 2016: a bad year for people who need real homes, not investments](#)".

**Dec 13:** Interview in Publico (Portuguese) following Leilani's mission to Portugal, by Joana Gorjão Henriques, "[Relatora da ONU sobre habitação em Portugal: "Algumas das condições que vi são deploráveis"](#)".

**Nov 17:** Article in The Premium Times on the evictions in Lagos, Nigeria, "[Nigeria, Lagos govts. must explain forced eviction of Otodo Gbame residents – UN](#)".

**Nov 1:** Op-Ed in Open Democracy, "[Time to recognize the right to life for those living in homelessness and inadequate housing](#)".

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### THE SHIFT - Update

Launched at Habitat 3 with the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights and United Cities and Local Governments, *The Shift* is a growing global platform of committed stakeholders ready to help ensure housing is recognized as a human right. Plans for 2017 are in the works - so stay tuned!

experiencing poverty.  
Rea more in "[Edged Out](#)".

### DID YOU KNOW?

**The 5 largest cities in the world are in Asia/South-East Asia.**

Tokyo, Japan tops the list with over 37 million people, followed by Jakarta, Indonesia (30 million), Delhi, India (almost 25 million), Manila, Philippines (24 million), and Seoul, South Korea (23 million).

Source: [World Atlas.com](#)

### WHAT TO WATCH FOR IN WINTER 2017:

#### March

Presentation of Leilani's next report on the right to housing and financialization to the UN Human Rights Council

#### April

Country mission to Chile  
- dates to be confirmed



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