

Homelessness is the condition of people without a permanent dwelling, such as a house or apartment. People who are homeless are most often unable to acquire and maintain regular, safe, secure and adequate housing. The legal definition of homeless varies from country to country, or among different jurisdictions in the same country or region.

Most countries provide a variety of services to assist homeless people. These services often provide food, shelter (beds) and clothing and may be organized and run by community organizations (often with the help of volunteers) or by government departments or agencies. These programs may be supported by the government, charities, churches and individual donors. Many cities also have street newspapers, which are publications designed to provide employment opportunity to homeless people. While some homeless have jobs, some must seek other methods to make a living. Begging or panhandling is one option, but is becoming increasingly illegal in many cities. People who are homeless may have additional conditions, such as physical or mental health issues or sub-



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Right to housing



Right to housing

"Housing is absolutely essential to human flourishing. Without stable shelter, it all falls apart." - Matthew Desmond



Right to housing

The right to housing is recognised in a number of international human rights instruments. Article 25 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights recognises the right to housing as part of the right to an adequate standard of living. It states that:

“Everyone has the right to a standard of living adequate for the health and well-being of himself and of his family, including food, clothing, housing and medical care and necessary social services, and the right to security in the event of unemployment, sickness, disability, widowhood, old age or other lack of livelihood in circumstances beyond his control.”



Article 11(1) of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR) also guarantees the right to housing as part of the right to an adequate standard of living.

In international human rights law the right to housing is regarded as a freestanding right. This was clarified in the 1991 General Comment no 4 on Adequate Housing by the UN Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights.

The general comment provides an authoritative interpretation of the right to housing in legal terms under international law.

The right to housing is also enshrined in Article 28 of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, Article 16 of the European Social Charter (Article 31 of the Revised European Social charter) and in the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights.

According to UN Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, aspects of right to housing under ICESCR include: legal security of tenure; availability of services, materials, facilities and infrastructure; affordability; habitability; accessibility; location and cultural adequacy.

As a political goal, right to housing was declared in F. D. Roosevelt's 1944 speech on the Second Bill of Rights.

UN Habitat

The right to adequate housing was a key issue at the 1996 Habitat meeting in Istanbul and a main theme in the Istanbul Agreement and Habitat Agenda. Paragraph 61 of the agenda identifies the steps required by governments to "promote, protect and ensure the full and progressive realisation of the right to adequate housing". The 2001 Habitat meeting, known as Istanbul +5, reaffirmed the 1996 Istanbul Agreement and Habitat Agenda and established the UN Human Settlement Programme to promote the right to housing in cooperation with the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights. Known as UN-HABITAT, the programme is the most important international forum for the right to housing. It is tasked with promoting housing rights through awareness campaigns, and to develop benchmarks and monitoring systems.

