

# GLOBAL TENANT



INTERNATIONAL UNION OF TENANTS' QUARTERLY MAGAZINE September 2006



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# Forced evictions concern North and South alike

The right to housing, a fundamental right, is confirmed in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights.

Any human being, wherever she is, must be able to have a roof allowing her to live in a decent way. A home is a basic human right, to ensure the dignity of each individual person. It is also the starting point for the road to social cohesion and to the prosperity of society.

However, this right is too often violated or neglected by the States. This is the case each time that a resident; a tenant, an owner or of other form of tenure, is evicted from his or her accommodation either by the State itself, or by actors possessing the economic power.

The Commission of the Humans Rights clearly affirms in its Resolution 77 of 1993 that the "practice of forced evictions constitutes an obvious violation of humans rights". This illegal practice with regards to international law is not the prerogative of some countries.

Quite to the contrary, evictions take place in all countries of the South and North alike; The eviction of residents of the slums in Cachan outside Paris, evictions of tenants in Croatia - as an indirect consequence of the war, the mass eviction campaign in Zimbabwe under the pretext of cleansing districts, or those evictions that presently occur in China at the excuse of modernization of urban centres.

Facing this dramatic development - with high human costs - it is important that information is dispersed, and it is of particular importance that each individual and each organization, particularly those which represent tenants, give their support for local collective initiatives and promote access to legal defence for badly-housed persons and for those who are threatened by eviction.

It also rests on our organizations to place and maintain these problems, and the respect for human rights, on the political agenda.

The right to housing is reinforced by the fight for social justice and actions of solidarity, here and everywhere.

*Carlo Sommaruga*  
*Secretary General*  
ASLOCA Romande,  
Switzerland



## Calendar

**October 2:** / UN Habitat Day / International Tenants' Day. IUT Theme: Stop Forced Evictions!

**October 6-8:** Housing strategies on the Balkans. IUT conference in Belgrade, Serbia, organised by Association of Tenants from Serbia

**October 6-7:** Municipal affordable housing in Europe, Poland and Krakow. Organised by the Polish Association of Tenants, PZL, in Krakow Poland.

**October 16-17:** EU Housing Ministers meeting, and EU conf. on Urban Renewal and Housing, Barcelona, Spain

**October 27-29:** TPAS Scotland Annual Conference, Dundee

**October 28:** Congress of the Danish Tenant Union,

**October 31:** Conference for smaller housing associations. National Housing Fed.

**November 3:** Affordable Housing: making it happen! Perth, Australia, organised by AHURI

**November 8:** Tenants' Union of Queensland's 20th Anniversary, Brisbane Australia

**November 15-17:** TPAS Cymru & Welsh Tenants' Federation 18th Joint Annual Conf.

## 2007

**September 21-23:** IUT Congress, Berlin Germany.

**For more information:** [www.iut.nu/conferences.htm](http://www.iut.nu/conferences.htm)

October 2, 2006 International Tenants' Day / UN World Habitat Day

## STOP Unfair EVICTIONS! STOP Inhuman REMOVALS!

**Imagine** being around 75 years old, having lived in your flat for maybe 40 years and having experienced communism, Stalinism, Nazism and now capitalism at its most extreme form. You have a small state pension that just covers the rent and the most necessary expenses to keep you afloat. The old run-down house you live in has been repossessed and the new owner wants to raise the rents by 200 %. "To market rents" she says. And there is nothing available on the market for the cost that you could absolutely afford. The new landlord sends you notices and threatening letters, thugs come by and threaten you, electricity wires get cut off, and heating is kept at a minimum in the wintertime. Town Hall Officials shrug their shoulders and just look at you.

**How would you feel?**

**Imagine** being the father of a family with five children and at 2 pm you are woken up by loud strange voices over a loud speaker demanding that you leave your home now. Military and police officers or local thugs pound at your door. You race to get your children and grab a few possessions. Your evictors enter your home. Any resistance is met by beatings with wooden bats. You stand outside in the darkness with your few belongings watching your house being bulldozed.

**How would you feel?**

### Some examples:

- 800,000 people may have been rendered homeless in Nigeria through evictions in 49 settlements from 2003-2006
- In England 26,000 tenants were evicted by local authorities and housing associations in 2002/03, and 93 % of evictions resulted from rent arrears
- In New York, the marshals complete about 25,000 evictions each year, about one for every five eviction warrants.
- 700,000 Zimbabweans from last years' evictions are still struggling to find shelter.
- In Italy more than 200,000 families have been threatened with eviction, 80 % for rent arrears. 15,000 families were evicted the first six months in 2005.
- In Prague, tenants who have been told, by the landlord, to evict their flats must themselves show proof to the Court that the order is without a valid reason – the landlord does not need to show proof in the first instance.
- In Poland, effective ways of getting rid of "troublesome" tenants are: dismantling of railings, disconnecting electricity and cutting of the water supply and heating.
- In Pakistan, the construction of the Lyari Expressway in Karachi, will have rendered over 250,000 people homeless.
- In Osaka, Japan, an estimated 10,000 homeless people who find shelters in streets, parks and on riversides are threatened to be evicted.
- Australia: Approx. 12,000 police assisted evictions, and 100,000 evictions take place annually.

Of course, the circumstances under which these evictions occur are not comparable, but behind the figures, behind every one and each of them, lay a personal tragedy, irrespective of country and political doctrine.

Also, all available figures give evidence that evictions are increasing worldwide, which completely contradicts the UN Millennium Development Goal, Target 11:

*Improve the lives of at least 100 million slum dwellers by 2020.*

Despotic laws, not recognising international treaties and which make inhuman evictions possible should be abolished.

Such evictions violate human and housing rights and should be executed only in rare circumstances, and should not be executed at all before alternative and acceptable accommodation has been found.

### In this context:

**The Members of the International Union of Tenants together with the International Alliance of Inhabitants call for the ending of unfair removals and of despotic evictions!**

For more info concerning evictions: [www.iut.nu](http://www.iut.nu), [www.habitants.org](http://www.habitants.org) and [www.cohre.org](http://www.cohre.org)  
Read the complete statement on [www.iut.nu/Habitat%20Day/2006\\_IUT\\_IAIstatement\\_final.doc](http://www.iut.nu/Habitat%20Day/2006_IUT_IAIstatement_final.doc)



# FORCED EVICTIONS

are gross violation of human rights which indicates a systematic disregard of recognized human rights standards

By Miloon Kothari, UN Special Rapporteur on Adequate Housing

Since my appointment as UN Special Rapporteur on Adequate Housing, I have witnessed and increasingly received reports on forced evictions and displacement around the world. Many contemporary cases of forced evictions constitute a gross violation of human rights and indicate a systematic disregard of recognized human rights standards on the part of States.

Forced evictions and displacement occur due to different reason. They are taking place in countries world wide, ranging from democratic to authoritarian states. Many are so-called development-based evictions, which include evictions often planned or conducted with the justification or under the pretext of serving the “public good,” such as those linked to slum-clearance drives, large-scale infrastructure or other development projects, and land-acquisition measures associated with urban renewal, housing renovation, city beautification, or other land-use programmes.

Evictions are also on the raise due to the reluctance of states to control speculation in housing and property.

## Only in exceptional circumstances

Forced evictions are acts and/or omissions involving the coerced or involuntary displacement of individuals, groups and communities from homes and/or lands and common property resources that were occupied or depended upon, thus eliminating or limiting the ability of an individual, group or community to reside or work in a particular dwelling, residence or location, without the provision of, and access to, appropriate forms of legal or other protection.

Evictions must be carried out lawfully, only in exceptional circumstances, and in full accordance with relevant provisions of international human rights and humanitarian law.

## Forced evictions affect the most vulnerable

Above all, the impact on those affected can often be characterized as a human tragedy. In the wake of forced evictions, people are often left homeless and destitute, without means of earning a livelihood and, in practice, with no effective access to legal or other remedies. As a general rule, forced evictions affect the poorest, the socially and economically most vulnerable and marginalized sectors of society and intensify inequality and social conflict, contributing to segregation and the creation of ‘apartheid cities’.

These examples illustrate the scale and global reach of this perhaps the most devastating violation of the right to adequate housing are numerous;

**Zimbabwe:** It is now one year after the launch of Operation Murambatsvina (Restore Order), initiated by the Government of Zimbabwe to “rid the capital of illegal structures, businesses and criminal activities”. An estimated 700,000 people lost their homes, their livelihoods, or both, according to UN sources. The majority of the people having been evicted are still homeless, in resettlement camps or living in inadequate housing conditions, without food, potable water or sanitation. Human suffering and violations of the right to adequate housing, including forced evictions, continue to occur.

**Pakistan:** I have recently drawn attention to a new wave of forced evictions in connection with the construction of the Lyari Expressway in Karachi leading to the destruction of thousands of houses since the beginning of this year. The affected families, already amongst the poorest of the poor, have allegedly been left to fend for themselves on the streets without basic shelter. In cases where relocation has been offered, the relocation sites are reportedly located far away from livelihood opportunities and are lacking in civic services. The evictions have allegedly been accompanied by the excessive use of force by the police and local authorities, and reports of related death and injury have been received. When completed, the project allegedly will have rendered an estimated over 250,000 people homeless, and 25,000 people have been evicted between January and May 2006 alone.

**India:** Since November 2004 an estimated 400,000 slum dwellers have been displaced from their homes in Mumbai, India. In May 2004 governmental promises were made to regularize slums built in Mumbai before the year 2000. Notwithstanding, in November the same year, the Mumbai government initiated a massive housing demolition drive lasting for several months resulting in an estimated 92,000 homes being razed to the ground throughout the city.

**Nigeria:** According to information received, evictions and demolitions in Abuja communities and other settlements in the Federal Capital Territory of Nigeria have taken place since 2003/2004. With the most recent wave of evictions the total number of dispossessed and homeless people has allegedly reached an estimated 800,000 persons.





Miloon Kothari speaks at the World Urban Forum in Vancouver. Photo IUT

- an immediate halt of all forced evictions and for concerned authorities to carry out open and genuine consultations with affected persons and to ensure that evictions do not result in homelessness;
- urgent attention and comprehensive action from the global community, including UN programmes and agencies, international financial institutions, bilateral agencies and donors;
- support to the thousands of human rights defenders across the world that are peacefully opposing forced evictions.

## In the name of “development”...

The list of situations where violations of human rights, often those of the poorest of the poor, take place in the name of ‘development’ in one form or another can be continued; The North Rail and South Rail project in the **Philippines** will, when completed, have evicted and displaced an estimated 150,000 families, with inadequate relocation alternatives.

Testimonies from **United States of America** have been received regarding the eviction from and demolition of older public housing, without adequate replacement housing alternatives. In **Canada**, thousands of households continue to be evicted, due to high rents and inadequate income support, without proper hearings and with no consideration of whether these evictions will result in homelessness. In the **Russian Federation**, allegations are continuously received regarding the forced evictions of Roma communities, including as part of local political electoral campaigns

## Given the alarming increase of forced evictions, I particularly call for:

- States, consistent with their human rights obligations, to take steps to minimize evictions and displacement by: undertaking human rights impact assessment studies; search for alternative development strategies and adopt comprehensive housing policies and legislations on forced evictions based on human rights standards. An inclusive approach needs to be adopted to address the issues of forced evictions, security of tenure, legalization of informal settlements and slum-upgrading, and to ensure close consultation with those affected at the planning stage and with respect for the right to participation in decision-making in these areas;

## Mockery of agreed targets and commitments

States should remember that, under international human rights law, evictions should only be carried out under exceptional circumstances, following a well defined procedure. In this respect, I wish to draw attention to the Basic Principles and Guidelines on Development-based Evictions and Displacement<sup>1</sup>.

We are witnesses to large-scale evictions around the world today. We are also witnessing a deepening of the global housing and living conditions crisis as detailed in the UN-Habitat State of the World Cities Report 2005-2006. Such a reality makes a mockery of agreed Millennium Development Goal and other internationally agreed targets, goals and commitments, including those detailed in the Habitat Agenda.

I urge UN-Habitat, OHCHR, the newly formed UN Human Rights Council and other international bodies to play a larger role in holding States accountable to their human rights commitments, including halting the practice of forced evictions. I urge the world’s governments to abide by their international human rights commitments to uphold the human right to adequate housing especially for the millions of women, men and children that continue to be forced to live in inadequate and insecure housing and living conditions.

This article is an extract from Mr Kothari’s statement at the World Urban Forum III, Vancouver.

Read the full statement: [www.iut.nu/UN/Evictions/UNHCHR\\_Kothari\\_2006.doc](http://www.iut.nu/UN/Evictions/UNHCHR_Kothari_2006.doc)

<sup>1</sup> <http://www.ohchr.org/english/issues/housing/annual.htm> Document: E/CN.4/2006/41



# MASS EVICTIONS IN CROATIA

The sector of housing is boiling in Croatia. The Alliance of Tenant Associations of Croatia has launched a call via the Internet<sup>1</sup> against increasingly frequent forced evictions in this old former Yugoslav province. Independence indeed deeply upset the right of the lease, plunging thousands of occupants of apartments in precariousness.



Photo: Sanja Mahac

## Secure roofs before 1995

According to a law of 1945, the dwellings were at the full disposal of their occupants. The tenants had the right of occupation for all their life which and could be left to sons and daughters. The only limit imposed by the law was prohibition to sell the apartment.

## Total reversal of situation

After the war, in 1996, the Croatian Parliament adopted the law on the rent of a dwelling. According to these new legal provisions, the right of occupation to perpetuity was erased. Always according to the law of 1996, the occupants must from now on obtain the authorization of the owner of the flat, in particular when ex-

pecting a child or when planning to live with a new spouse. The owner can refuse or accept with his liking. If the authorization were not granted or if this one were not required, the tenants are threatened to be evicted.

There is only one clause introduced by the legislator that now defends the tenants: The legal duty for the owners, who want to settle in their apartments, to provide a replacement-dwelling.

However, even this weak protection did not pass the slope of the constitutional Court. In 1998, the latter removed this provision. The occupants of thousands of residences found themselves without protection vis-à-vis their owners. The owner can thus expel them of the apartments which the tenants

regarded as granted to perpetuity and in which they had often invested time and energy for decades.

## More than 30,000 tenants affected

Last November, a clause made it possible to increase the rents by 60 percent of certain apartments. According to the Alliance of the Tenants Associations of Croatia, 30,000 people are touched by this raise.

For these reasons, the tenants association launched a countrywide campaign: Zero Expulsion in Croatia, to try and restore the housing rights of the tenants. The International Alliance of Inhabitants, various social and political organizations, of the trade unions and the personalities joined to this action which requires primarily the abrogation of the law of 1996. A petition was launched.

## Ethnic tensions

The situation becomes further complicated as there is an ethnic dimension to the problems; Many owners who wish to settle in their apartments are Serb Montenegrins who fled Croatia before and during the war. And they encounter enormous difficulties in regaining the residences which they occupied before the confrontations and which today are often inhabited by Croats. These difficulties are denounced by many organizations, as the Council of Europe and Amnesty International.

/ by *Mélanie Maillard* ASLOCA (Assoc. Suisse des Locataires Fédération Romande), Switzerland. This article was published in the ASLOCA newsmagazine; Droit au Logement, April 2006.

<sup>1</sup> [www.habitants.org/article/archive/451/](http://www.habitants.org/article/archive/451/)



# EVICTIONS and HOUSING RIGHTS in Europe

## The Nederlandse Woonbond fears sharp increases in the number of evictions

The Nederlandse Woonbond fears sharp increases in the number of evictions in the coming years. The introduction of more market competition in the rental housing sector by the current centrist/right-wing government will lead to far higher rents. This, combined with economising measures such as cuts in housing subsidies, is leading to a decrease in consumer spending power. Tenants must devote an increasingly larger portion of their income to rent – as long as they can continue to pay it.

However, the number of evictions has been steadily rising in recent decades. In 1996 there were more than 6,000 evictions and by 2004 it had risen to about 8,400. In 90 percent of the cases the reason for the eviction was rent arrears. The stricter debt collection policies of housing owners have somewhat curtailed the growth of evictions.

### Black lists

A new development is the central registration of renters who are in arrears of their rent or energy bills. Tenants who are behind on their rent or energy payments should brace themselves for the worst. Not only can they be evicted from their homes or have their gas and electricity shut off, but their debts will also soon be centrally registered at the Bureau Krediet Registratie (the Credit Registration Bureau).

Source: Nederlandse Woonbond, Amsterdam

## Denmark

Between the years 2004 and 2004 the numbers of tenants that could not pay the rents in Denmark, and who were forced to leave their homes, increased by more than 35 percent. In 2002 there were about 3,000 cases and in 2004 there were some 4,000 cases. The figures for 2005 predict further increases, according to the Danish housing associations. Today there is no registration and knowledge of who these evicted people and families are, and what happens to them afterwards. Ms Eva Kjer Hansen, Minister of Social Affairs, has now instructed the local authorities to find out more information about the aftermath of evictions.

Source: Boligen 1, 2006

## Finland

In Finland, the number of eviction petitions to the execution authorities has remained fairly stable, but nevertheless increased by about 12 percent. In 1996 there were about 6,500 petitions, in 2005 about 7,300 petitions. In 2005, the number of evictions carried out was 2,471. In all of these cases, the flat concerned were emptied by the execution authorities.

In Southern Finland, the number of evictions carried out were 1,232, showing that the problem is heavily concentrated in residential growth areas. Of these evictions, 321 were carried out in Helsinki.



For comparison, it is worth knowing that in Helsinki there are 288,225 residences of which 145,670 are rented. About half of the rental residences have been manufactured through a state-subsidised housing loan (ARAVA), and the other half are privately owned rental residences.

In Helsinki, there are, in total, 258,385 rental property residents. See also article on page 11.

Source: Vuokralaisten Keskusliitto ry

### Norway manages to decrease evictions

The Tenants' Association in Oslo notes that the Norwegian government has clearly defined an objective in their paper, *"The path to finding a home"*; By the end of 2007 the number of eviction notices shall be reduced by 50 per cent and the number of evictions by 30 per cent.

And the trend is positive: In 2005, both the number of eviction notices and the number of evictions fell by around 20 per cent.

#### Project; Less eviction of tenants

The Tenants Associations in Oslo is conducting a project, funded by the Norwegian State Housing Bank, named *Less evictions of tenants*. The objects are to establish an information system about rights, obligations and possibilities of eviction, to give tenants who have received eviction notices free assessment of the case and free legal advice. Also, to assist in contacts with the local social service offices with the purpose of finding good solutions for the tenants and when needed assist in contacts with the local bailiff.

#### Lack of social housing in Norway worries the UN

The UN Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights notes in May 2005 the increasing number of evictions carried out in Norway, especially in Oslo, mainly as a consequence of unpaid rent. The Committee is also concerned that the disadvantaged and marginalized groups in society are particularly affected by the privatization of municipal social housing and rising housing prices. Despite the assistance provided through the State Housing Bank, the Committee is particularly concerned that the number of social housing units for low-income individuals and families is far from adequate.

The Committee notes with concern that an estimated 5,200 people are homeless in Norway.

Sources: NLF, and Office of the UN High Commissioner of Human rights, E/C.12/1/Add.109.

### Sweden and forced evictions

During 2000-2005, an average of 4,400 households were evicted every year in Sweden, which includes between 1,500 and 2,000 children, under 18. That is 22,000 eviction cases in six years! Rent arrears accounted for 85 per cent of the cases. Homelessness is still an unsolved problem in Sweden. In April 2006, 17,800 people were recorded homeless by the National Board of Health and Welfare.

Security against eviction is embodied in the Swedish Land

Code, which provides that tenants may not be evicted if they are prevented from paying the rent on time on account of illness or similar circumstances.

Landlords can evict tenants who have not paid the rent or have been unacceptably disruptive. Tenants have three weeks in which to pay their rent. Their debts may be met by the local social welfare committee, which plays a very active role in this process, as in certain cases it must be informed of proposed evictions before they are carried out.

If a tenant fails to respect the termination of the tenancy contract the landlord can apply to the courts for its enforcement. Tenants have a right of appeal. In certain circumstances tenants may be entitled to legal aid. Eviction orders are implemented by the enforcement service, prior to which tenants must be given the opportunity of making a statement. Evictions must not be carried out less than a week after such statements, and if necessary a stay of execution may be granted for eight weeks.

Under the social welfare legislation, local authorities are responsible for re-housing citizens residing within their boundaries.

Source: Swedish Union of Tenants

### France prohibits evictions in winter

After March 15<sup>th</sup> almost 715,000 people were under threat of eviction in France due to arrears in rents, which have risen by 7% in two years. According to the 2006 report from the Abbé Pierre Foundation almost nine million people in France are experiencing severe housing problems. Of these, some three million are homeless – either on the streets or in a very difficult housing situation.

Evictions are a big problem in France and each year 140,000 tenants are affected by eviction judgements, Jacquy Tiset of Confédération Nationale du Logement (CNL) lays down.

Executions are suspended during winter, but they resume after March 15<sup>th</sup>. And evictions may become fiercer in the future, says Jacquy Tiset of CNL, as our Minister for Home affairs asked the local state representatives to allow use of public forces for executing the court decisions.

In a parallel direction, CNL encourages municipalities to adopt ordinances forbidding evictions. Although these de-





cisions are illegal and always contested in justice by the local state representative, they are generally efficient, especially when the landlord is a public housing company. Municipalities adopting such ordinances are more and more numerous.

Mr Tiset continues; “Although it is rather difficult, to execute eviction judgements and although their human consequences are less serious than formerly, we are going on asking for a new rule forbidding evictions without rehousing. As long as families may be deprived of a home, their furniture taken to be sold, their children taken to orphanage, there will have no right to housing.”

Source: CNL. More info, in French, on [www.lacnl.com](http://www.lacnl.com)

## Switzerland also evicts

The Swiss law unfortunately does not include any protection for the tenants against evictions, neither in the social sector, nor in the private sector. Once the lease has been cancelled, the Judge must pronounce the eviction of the tenant. These evacuations can take place any time, even in winter, says François Zutter, lawyer at ASLOCA, which is the tenant association in the French speaking part of Switzerland. There are no legal provisions which make it possible for the Judge to take into account any human reasons, such as children or elderly persons involved.

Moreover, the procedure notice regarding non-payment of the rent is extremely fast and severe. When the tenant is late in the payment of the rent, the owner can give him a 30 days deadline to regulate the entire debt and threaten him of cancellation of the lease. If the arrear is not regulated within this time, the owner can terminate the contract within another 30 days notice, for the end of the following month. Thus, in less than 3 months a lease can be irremediably cancelled and the Judge must then pronounce the evacuation of the tenant, even if in the meantime the back rent is completely reabsorbed!

This severity of the procedure leads to dramatic situations as the cities practically do not have emergency residences to accommodate the tenants without roofs. In the canton of Geneva, with some 200,000 residences, the number of requests for execution of the judgements of evacuations increased from 1,376 in 2002 to 1,627 in 2005, an increase of 18 percent.

Source: ASLOCA, Geneva

## Slovenia keeps some traditions from the past

The Council of Europe and its Committee of Social Rights concluded in its report (2005) on Slovenia's compliance with the European Social Charter, article 31, that the Committee still lacks information on eviction procedures, in spite of the Committees' inquiries. The Committee also states that Slovenia is not in conformity with article 31§2, legal protection for persons threatened by eviction, if the next report does not include the necessary information. The tenant association in Slovenia, ZNS, has reported about repeatedly unjust evictions in Slovenia.

Today tenants can be evicted if the landlord can arrange



Evicted household in Devenport, England, in the early 1900's

for a substitute flat. In fact this means that tenants can be forced to move from flat to flat at anytime.

Landlords can evict a tenant if he/she has a *culpable* reason, such as “opposing to landlords' entry to flat” – which in practise means that a landlord have access to the flat at anytime, “renovation of flat” – tenants have had their inner walls knocked down, and “omission of cleaning the flat” – an elderly lady was given a notice to quit because she did not keep her windows-sill clean. Newly changed court practises give landlords the right to evict the tenants' family after a tenant's death, regardless of the family's social situation.

Source: Association of Tenants of Slovenia, ZNS

## England; twice fold increase of possession actions

Each year social landlords in England issue around 550,000 Notices Seeking Possession (NOSPs) to their tenants, a figure equivalent to around 13 per cent of stock managed. Some 26,000 tenants were evicted by

Local Authorities and Housing Associations in 2002/03, equating to around one tenant in every 200. Evictions for ASB, Anti Social Behaviour, amounted to around seven percent of this total – some 1,500 in all. Possession actions by social landlords more than doubled 1993-2003. Once evicted, former tenants are often disqualified from social housing. About one notice in every 20 leads ultimately to eviction, though this proportion is much higher for actions triggered by ASB.

On March 31<sup>st</sup> 2006 a count gave that 96,370 households in England were in temporary accommodation, and 74 per cent of households in temporary accommodation included dependant children. It is estimated that at any point in time there are around 800 people sleeping rough in Great Britain, which equates to 7,000 people over the period of one year.

Source: Department for Communities and Local Government, June 2006.

## Greece: Procedure for faster eviction of tenants

refusing to pay their rent was adopted in Greece already in 1997. The owner sends a notice to the tenant, asking for payment of all due rent. If there is no full payment within a month, a request is submitted to the judge to order the eviction of the tenant. There is no court procedure. The order of the judge is executed after 20 working days.

Source: Hellenic Property Federation

# “There may be more riots to come in Paris”

**In the autumn of 2005, shocking footage of the riots in the suburbs of Paris filled our television screens. A whole month passed before the situation subsided. “But it may happen again,” warns Marc Ruer, himself a resident of one of the affected suburbs.**



Marc Ruer, CNL

We met Marc Ruer in Paris at the beginning of the summer, at the conference and 90<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Confédération Nationale du Logement, CNL, the largest and oldest tenant association in France.

Marc works for one of the local CNL chapters in Paris, but he is also active in the national association. Marc has lived in Aubervilliers since 1973 and Aubervilliers was one of the Paris suburbs which were affected by the riots.

“I was at home when it started, and three days later it was happening everywhere,” he says.

Marc was far from surprised at the disturbances, but he was shocked that the riots became so violent and widespread.

What the news reports didn't say was that representatives of CNL together with parents and local council workers talked with the youths, tried to calm them down, and protected rental housing and council buildings.

“Otherwise the situation would defi-

nately have deteriorated even more,” believes Marc, who emphasises that the demonstrations were directed towards the politicians, and the violence towards cars, buses and sport halls – not people.

## “Firemen a symbol of the government”

Firemen attempting to quench the flames coming from the multitude of burning cars were attacked by the youths. “The firemen became a symbol for the government,” explains Marc. “Young, inexperienced police, many from rural areas, were brought in and were unnecessarily aggressive to begin with.”

Some of the youths were as young as 11-13 years old, but others were older, 20-25. And most of them are ordinary French young boys and, some, girls. Some of them black, but they are as French as anyone else, says Marc. He rejects the notion that the influence

of Islam lies behind the riots. “Of course it's good for politicians to be able to shuffle the cards and try to explain the riots in terms of Islam, when it is actually about poor living conditions.” Poor living conditions such as high rise houses in desperate need of renovation, low incomes, high rent levels, and a major lack of housing.

In addition, unemployment is high, about 35 percent in this area. There is ghettoisation and discrimination on the basis of skin colour, and there are too many people living in the same area who have similar problems.

## Solutions to the problems?

Marc Ruer wishes that some people could be persuaded to move away from the problem areas, but then they must be offered something better. It's also a matter of building more and better schools, establishing more shops, and improving communication with the world outside the suburbs – starting with the rest of Paris. But the primary concern should be to reduce unemployment and offer good education and good housing, even to those who are satisfied with their current housing.

These are “social housing” areas, where residents' income must not be above a certain level at the time when they move in. If a resident gets a better-paid job after moving in, he or she is allowed to stay in the same flat, but the rent is then raised. “We also need more police, local police officers, who should be here before problems start to escalate,” summarises Marc, who believes that nowhere near enough has been done since the riots. “We need radical changes in the suburbs of Paris – otherwise the riots will just flare up again.”

Text and photo: Johan Klintberger





# FINLAND: The Central Union of Tenants, 60 years

Ms Anja Mäkeläinen and Ms Raija Mäkinen, senior representatives at the general meeting of the Central Union of Tenants, representing Asuntosäätiö.  
Photo IUT



**The Central Union of Tenants has been in operation for 60 years, and the CUT has seen several generations of skilled man- and women power. Over the decades, the society, environment and living conditions – especially housing – have changed. In the decades since the war, the quality of housing has improved considerably.**

The Central Union of Tenants, CUT, was established just after World War II, in 1946 by private individuals who were concerned about the difficult housing situation in Finland. At the end of 1945, Finland faced a critical housing shortage. About 14,000 dwellings had been severely damaged during the war; only a modest amount of new housing had been built from 1939 to 1944. Some 112,000 dwellings were lost to the ceded territories, and homes had to be found for the displaced persons.

Between 1940 and 1950 the rents doubled in Finland, and cost of living increased sevenfold. As in several other European countries, the CUT was established in close partnership with the trade unions. The period between the wars was characterized by housing shortage and the political housing policy was very limited. Rent tribunals controlled rents and distribution of rental flats until 1924 when rent regulation was abolished and replaced by a new rental law in 1925, which considerably improved the position of the tenants.

In 1948 the CUT, together with several other socio-political organisations, proposed to the government the creation of a State Housing Fund, ARA. ARA's main task is to finance state-subsidised rental housing production. About 32 percent of the housing stock was rented in 2002. Half of the rental housing in Finland consists of "social housing", meaning that it is subsidised by ARA.

## Housing Academy

On April 22 the CUT celebrated its 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary, starting with a general meeting, or a union meeting, when the Unions' rules were discussed and brought up to date, together with the organisational structure. Union meetings will be held every two years, to ensure that the voices of the members are heard. Also, other relevant organisations and companies on the business arena will be invited to these meetings.

A CUT Housing Academy was established, for the training of active members.

The meeting was given topicality by the visit of the secretary general of the International Union of Tenants, Magnus Hammar. He brought greetings from people and organisations experiencing conditions very different from those of us Finnish tenants. He also emphasised that housing culture and human dignity go hand in hand.

The general meeting was followed by a formal reception at the Government Banquet Hall, hosted by the Ministry of Finance. Some 200 guests enjoyed food and drinks, together with musical entertainment.

Source: Central Unions of Tenants / Vuokralaisten Keskusliitto

# IUT at the World Urban Forum III

**"We experience similar developments in developing countries as well as in developed countries – the tendency is that governments step down from their responsibilities to provide affordable housing."**

Magnus Hammar, IUT, questioned the lack of involvement from many governments; "Governments think that they can rely on the private sector to build for the needy. Yes, this is true for the upper segments of the hunters for accommodation, but certainly not true for the many that can not afford market costs."

## Theme: Sustainable Cities – Turning Ideas into Action

IUT participated under the sub theme: Social Inclusion and Cohesion and emphasised that affordable rental housing is a necessary and crucial element for supporting and facilitating social inclusion.

The seminar was a joint arrangement between IUT and the SCC, Swedish Cooperative Centre. SCC supports the organisation and construction of new housing co-operatives in several developing countries.

The presentation *Rental and Cooperative Housing as complements to ownership* was well received and resulted in questions and dialogues. Magnus represented the tenants and IUT, together with Ms Martha Lewis of the Tenants' Rights Action Coalition in Vancouver.

Magnus Hammar IUT, and Gustavo D. Gonzales, SCC. Photo IUT



Sleeping in a hammock is more comfortable than a hard bench. It is 8 am in Vancouver but he needs to sleep some more hours, as the traffic did not decrease until long after midnight. Photo IUT

## Rental housing – a necessity

The IUT and the SCC pointed out the necessity of providing and offering not only accommodation for ownership, in all countries irrespective of stage of development. There is requirement for affordable rental housing for all households, at different stages of life; for young people, when studying, during unemployment, after divorcing and for the elderly. Also, particularly in Europe, rental housing is considered as good and attractive as any other form of tenure. Many in the audience were surprised to learn that European cities often consist of over 50 %, or even 70% - 80 %, of rental housing.

This five-day meeting brought together some 10 000 housing activists, researchers and representatives from municipalities and governments from over 100 nations. Next time, in 2008, the World Urban Forum is hosted by the city of Nanjing, China.

## Homeless and misery a few blocks away

The Mayor of Vancouver Mr Sam Sullivan gave in his speech prominence to Vancouver as an exceptionally well planned city, and said that housing construction has been one of the priorities. Despite these efforts, many of the visitors on their way to the conference centre in the mornings could observe the strikingly large number of homeless people huddling up and sleeping outside churches, in street corners, outside garages and in parks. In March 2005, 2 174 homeless people were recorded homeless in a 24 hour count by the Social and Planning and Research Council of BC. Street homelessness had grown by 238 % since 2002, from 333 to 1 127 people. People with aboriginal identity were significantly over-represented.

Furthermore, just 20 minutes east of the conference centre anyone out walking is met by great misery. Hundreds of drug addicts and alcoholics inhabit the streets, hang about bars and reside outside pawnshops and hotels with rooms rented-by-the-hour. Most are infected by Aids/HIV, according to NGOs. Lines are long for free meals at soup kitchens organised by the churches.



# Life in a kommunalka

**For 33 years, the Vdovin family have lived in a *kommunalka* – a communal apartment – in central St Petersburg. As many as one million St Petersburg residents continue to live in similar communal apartments, a relic from the Soviet era.**



During Soviet times, the Vdovin family were not even allowed to put their names in the queue for an apartment of their own, since they lived in a relatively large room and were considered to be “privileged”. In the new Russia, money is the way in to good housing.

The kommunalka was born shortly after the 1917 revolution, both as a response to the critical lack of housing among the poor and as an attempt to render the bourgeois Czar-sympathisers harmless. In cities like St Petersburg and Moscow, the Bolsheviks packed people without homes into seized Patrician apartments and even smaller apartments, where each family was given a single room. Often large apartments were divided up further, by erecting more walls.

## The longing for privacy

The Soviet Union collapsed in 1991, but the kommunalka lives on. To the annoyance of most.

“Of course there are elderly people and people who are alone, who have lived like this their whole lives, and it would be hard for them to live in any other way. They are used to having people around to spend time with,” says Jurij Vdovin.

“On the other hand, there are hundreds of thousands of people in this city who don’t know what it’s like to have a toilet which is only used by you and your family, and no-one else.”

Jurij Vdovin and his wife Ludmilla moved into their communal apartment

on Litejnij Prospekt in 1973, shortly after the birth of their son Rodion. According to the Russian media, 15 to 20 percent of St Petersburg’s five million residents continue to live in this legacy from Soviet times.

The Vdovin family lives on the fifth floor of a building constructed in 1861. On the outer door there are nine doorbells – one for each household. When Jurij Vdovin opens the door to his home, we are met by darkness. Yet another power cut. By candlelight, we fumble our way forward to a small, narrow kitchen. Saucepans, pots, pans, plates, cutlery and food items are carefully lined up on shelves and along the walls. The shared kitchen is equipped with six gas cookers and two worn-out sinks.

“Each family has its own little nook, I do the cooking here, and then we eat in our room,” says Ludmilla Vdovina, 62. Her husband mutters about the dirty dishes one of the neighbours has left behind. After a great deal of effort, they have managed to get rid of the cockroaches in the kitchen.

“It doesn’t seem to matter how many times I explain that the dirt could attract the cockroaches again!”

All the residents share two toilets and a bathtub with shower in a separate room.

“Yes, there are queues sometimes, especially in the morning,” says Ludmilla.

The rent for the family’s two rooms, 45 and 32 square metres, is 4,000 rou-

bles, or 130 Euro, a month, including gas and electricity.

“How are you supposed to be able to improve your living situation as a pensioner, with these market conditions?” says Jurij Vdovin, a former engineer. Like his wife Ludmilla, he receives a pension of around 2,600 roubles a month – or 80 Euro. However, a job managing a local human rights organisation, “Grazdanskij Kontrol”, ~Citizen Control, does boost his meagre pension somewhat.

## No money for normal people

The Vdovin family want nothing more than to move. However, if they sold both rooms the money simply wouldn’t be enough for two apartments, not even on the outskirts of the city. There is always the hope that some rich person will buy the entire kommunalka (400 square metres) and renovate it to create a large, luxury apartment. Then the tenants would each get their own apartment in exchange – or at least a room in a smaller kommunalka.

“But the chances are very slim. Our kommunalka is too big. It would cost at least a million dollars to buy it and renovate it,” says Rodion.

“In Russia, there’s money for everything – nuclear weapons and high salaries for bureaucrats. But there’s no money for housing for normal people.”

Text and Photo: Rolf Jakobsson

# UGANDA: Privatisation failed to

**Privatisation of rented flats has been the “buzz word” in the housing sector for the last few years in Uganda. The idea has been to solve the troublesome renting business, providing poor and middle income families with a decent living. But this has not happened, argues tenants’ unions and housing activists.**



Back in 2002, the Ugandan state was in the process of selling some 5,000 dwelling units, 1,500 of them in the capital of Kampala (Global Tenant, September 2002). This followed the international trend to privatise a growing number of rented flats. Now - four years later - some of these flats have still not been sold.

## Average income is not enough

Low- and middle income tenants have found these privatised flats too expensive. At the same time affluent people have been offered a number of options, as most of the new production are aimed for the high income range. This has caused for a lot of stress in Kampala where the Uganda National Tenants Union, UNTU, has tried to influence the housing policies.

“It’s been a very hard job and we still have a lot of work to do”, says Daniel Rugarama, formerly Secretary General of UNTU. The Tenants’ Union, currently without an acting head, is working with tenants’ savings and credit schemes with the aim to introduce these options on a national basis. UNTU is also engaged in civic education, bridging the gap between tenants and landlords.

“We have been pushing the government and other relevant institutions to introduce laws that would strengthen the tenant’s rights”, adds Rugarama.

## Teachers’ wage does not cover rent

Over the last years, the typical rent has increased by 5 to 10 per cent every year. This is far more than wages have developed. Due to this, many tenants have to use almost all their income to pay the rent. The standard monthly rent for a flat is around 238 000 Uganda Shillings (132 US\$), not including expenses for water, electricity, security arrangements etc. These high rents in a Ugandan setting can be compared with typical wages for a teachers and nurses being 200 000 Shillings (111 US\$) a month.

Following this, many families have to take any opportunity to earn some extra money. Many tenants have also found it necessary to let a room in their flats to be able to pay the rent.

## Slums and cholera

“We need a lot more flats at reasonable prices. As things stand right now, the building industry is only concerned with those who can afford costly apartments”, says Grace Ewiku, a “housing activist”, engaged in tenant issues. Still,



# benefit poor tenants

living with her parents at 26 years of age, Grace feels that housing policies has to change drastically.

“Poor people are forced to move to slum areas as they can not afford anything else. Once in these poor areas, often shanty towns, they suffer from bad sanitation, also running the risk of attracting serious diseases. During spring 2006, several people died of cholera”, adds Grace.

Grace Ewiku got familiar with the living standards of many Ugandans while working as a census enumerator for the Uganda Bureau of Statistics, counting the number of people in households. She has also been engaged in educating tenants on their rights by law in order not to be exploited.

“I was quite chocked by the living standards in many flats when I did this job. The way many people were living, jammed together in small apartments, made me very upset, says Grace who since then has been supporting the tenant’s struggle in Uganda on a voluntary basis.

## Lack of basic laws

One major problem is the lack of effective laws for tenants.

Anyone can be evicted with short notice. Others face chock increases in monthly rents, forcing them to leave urgently without any anywhere else to go. Some may end up in the slums where they still have to pay 10 – 15 000 Shillings (5-10 US\$) for being jammed together with oth-

ers without clean water, sanitation and electricity. Not to mention the poor or rather non-existent security of these parts of the city.

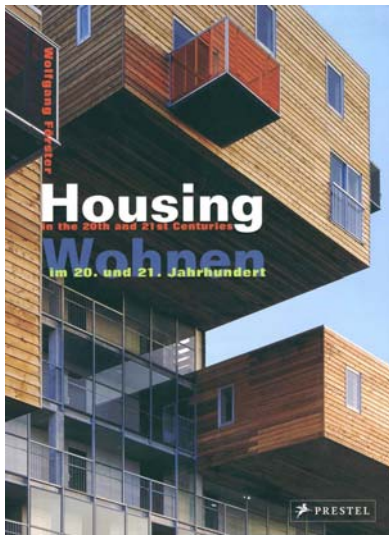
## New houses fall apart

For those who can afford newly built flats, there are still problems to be addressed as Ms Epodoi Carol can testify. Ms Carol is not happy when showing her two-bedroom apartment in the Bugolobi settlement in the outskirts of Kampala “The walls are full of cracks and the wallpaper is just about coming off. This place needs a total renovation even though it’s only a few years old”, says Ms Epodoi. The neighbourhood is considered relatively safe. Still, the entry door has steady iron bars as a safety precaution.

Paying 400 000 – 500 000 Shillings (222-277 US\$) a month, affordable as Epodoi’s husband has a well paid job at the university, the family still has to cope with cold water and frequent power cuts. However, on a positive note, the apartment, built under the National Housing Programme, comes with a balcony. This is the bonus part of the deal. Here, the Epodoi family can socialize with neighbours and friends. The spacious balcony also serves as playing ground for Ms Epodoi’s seven months old son, Oscar Okume.

Text and photo David Dahmén, freelance





## Housing in the 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> centuries

About 70 international outstanding residential housing projects are presented in this 175-page book, from the 1920's up till today. The projects described are considered as milestones of a new and social conviction concerning town construction and architectural design. The book makes an important contribution for the architectural history. The projects reveal the different goals in each era and this century's most progressive developments. Full colour photos. Texts are in English and in German. Author: Wolfgang Förster, ISBN: 3-791-33529-4

## Influence and Invisibility

Tenants in housing provision in Mwanza City, Tanzania

Rapid urbanisation in Africa has been accompanied by a growth of unplanned settlements and slums. A high proportion of urban residents in Tanzania are tenants who rent rooms in privately owned houses in unplanned settlements. Jenny Cadstedt provides a thoroughly researched account of how urban life in an African city is shaped by the conditions associated with private rental tenure.

Author: Jenny Cadstedt, 215 pages. ISBN: 0349-7003

## Housing Policies in Central Eastern Europe

Czech Republic / Hungary / Poland / Slovenia / Slovakia

Gives reasoning answers on 326 pages to how has housing policy in CEE countries developed before transformation, how did socialist housing policy affect housing provision during transition and which were the benefits and drawbacks of post-1990 housing policy instruments? Also, what is the current level of housing consumption in these countries and what is special about CEE housing markets?

Author: Christian Donner.

ISBN: 3-9500-4176-1

## UN-ECE Guidelines on Social Housing

The Guidelines address the institutional, legal and economic frameworks for social housing and experiences with social housing design, in the ECE region. The guidelines give the history of social housing in Western Europe and the development of social housing in countries in transition, and the privatisation processes. The guidelines further

describe the role of social housing in social cohesion. Each chapter contains conclusions and recommendations.

United Nations Publications 2006, ECE/HBP/137, or download from: [www.iut.nu/literature.htm](http://www.iut.nu/literature.htm)

## USA: The State of the Nation's Housing, 2006

The annual publication by the Joint Center for Housing Studies of Harvard University, USA.

This year's report states that rental markets turned a corner in 2005. For the first time in years, the number of renter households rose and the national rental vacancy rate fell. Improving job growth sparked demand just as lower multifamily rental production and higher condo conversion activity helped to trim supply, restoring balance to markets. With house prices high and climbing, renting was a relative bargain in many areas. Download via: [www.iut.nu/literature.htm](http://www.iut.nu/literature.htm)

## Report: Social dimensions of housing

This 94-page report by the European Foundation, a European Union body, explores quality of life in the context of housing conditions. It reports about large differences in housing conditions across European countries, in particular, the basic divide running between the 'old' EU15 Member States and the 10 new Member States, along with Bulgaria, Romania and Turkey. It finds that quality of life is largely dependent on factors such as personal safety, proximity to local infrastructure and the quality of the environment such as clear water, clean air and green areas.

ISBN: 92-897-0935-9

The report is also available on: [www.eurofound.eu.int/publications/htmlfiles/ef0594.htm](http://www.eurofound.eu.int/publications/htmlfiles/ef0594.htm)

