



March 25th 2017

To:
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Open letter: Solidarity against evictions in Bulacan and for new policies for the right to housing throughout the Philippines

We are writing to you on behalf of the International Alliance of Inhabitants (IAI), an international network of social organizations, which for many years has been committed to the defense of housing rights 'without borders'. Moreover, we cooperate with the UN Special Rapporteur on the Right to Adequate Housing and UN-Habitat to defend the right to housing and fight evictions.

We wish to express our deep concern at the very worrying news we have received from the civil society concerning the forced evictions scheduled to take place in your country, from 27 to 29/03/2017, of the current occupants of around 6,000 idle homes in Bulacan, Metro Manila. These houses have been occupied by around 20,000 poor people, organized by KADAMAY, a national alliance representing the urban poor in the Philippines. Occupation began on March 8th, marking International Women's Day.



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The occupation highlights the humanitarian and housing crisis faced by the homeless in the country, which is a result of the failure of the National Housing Authority (NHA) and the national Government to heed the demands for housing rights made by the poor.

This crisis was also recognized by the 65th and 66th meetings of the UN Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights that, on 7/10/2016, expressed concern over the violations of Article 11 of ICESCR.

This Covenant was ratified on 7/06/1974 by the Philippines, making it a legal obligation. This is particularly important, given that the Urban Development and Housing Act "legalizes" forced evictions and demolitions, and a large number of forced evictions are carried out in the name of urban development.

For this reason, the Committee urged the Government of the Philippines to take all necessary measures to increase the public funding allocated to social housing and to provide affordable social housing units for disadvantaged and marginalized individuals and families, including persons with disabilities, and to improve living conditions in informal settlements and collective bunkhouses for internally displaced persons. The Committee urged the Government to amend the Urban Development and Housing Act and to adopt a legal framework establishing procedures to be followed in the event of evictions that are in line with international standards, including the Committee's General comment No. 7 (1997) on forced evictions¹.

In spite of the above, and the discussions with housing agencies concerning the state of relocation sites, the demands fell on deaf ears, even at the Presidential Palace.

For these reasons, we stand in solidarity with the people threatened by eviction and we fully support the demands made by their organization, urging your Government to respect legal obligations:

- Pull out military and police forces from the occupied relocation sites.
- Order a moratorium on the evictions.
- Provide food, water and other basic services to all relocation sites, including the five relocation sites.
- Engage in full and respectful dialogue with KADAMAY, who are willing to work on this process to identify a mutually acceptable solution in order to recognize the legitimacy to occupy the housing units and freely distribute them to members.
- Distribute all idle housing units in PNP/AFP/BJMP/BFP resettlement sites to homeless citizens.
- Increase the public funding allocated to social housing to provide affordable social housing units for all homeless, disadvantaged and marginalized individuals and families.

We are ready to work together on implementing these demands, but if they are ignored or not dealt urgently, we are determined to launch a large-scale international campaign.

We look forward to your reply.

Sincerely.

Cesare Ottolini
IAI Global Coordinator

¹ http://tbinternet.ohchr.org/_layouts/treatybodyexternal/Download.aspx?symbolno=E%2fC.12%2fPHL%2fCO%2f5-6&Lang=en

