

NATIONAL LAW CENTER ON HOMELESSNESS & POVERTY

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Human Rights Report Card Gives U.S. Poor Grades on Housing

Washington, D.C. - The National Law Center on Homelessness & Poverty released its 2013 Human Right to Housing Report Card today, marked globally as human rights day, reviewing U.S. compliance with the human right to housing in the context of American homelessness over the past year. The report card found that while there were areas of improvement, much more needs to be done.

"In 2010, the federal government released a plan to end and prevent homelessness," said Maria Foscarinis, Executive Director of the Law Center, "ensuring affordable housing to very low-income people is essential to ending and preventing homelessness, and many of the poor grades we assigned in this year's report card reflect the failure to prioritize and fund such housing."

There were encouraging policy developments this year, most notably the Violence-Against Women Act 2013 reauthorization, which significantly expanded housing rights for survivors of domestic violence. Additionally, a federal court mandate upheld the order forcing government compliance with Title V of the McKinney-Vento Act requiring government agencies to make vacant properties available to homeless service agencies.

In another significant development, the U.S. Interagency Council on Homelessness began holding its member agencies accountable to their human rights obligations, following up on a report it issued with the U.S. department of Justice last year on the criminalization of homelessness and in response to inquiries from the United Nations this year.

"The U.S. Interagency Council on Homelessness deserves credit for beginning to hold its member agencies accountable to human rights standards following a question from the UN Human Rights Committee about the criminalization of homelessness in the U.S.," said Eric Tars, Director of Human Rights & Children's Rights Programs at the Law Center, "But we have yet to see actions being implemented, and our human rights obligations to our most vulnerable citizens remain compromised."

In order to improve its grades next year, the Law Center recommends that funds be

increased to at least \$1 billion per year for federal homelessness prevention programs and \$1 billion be devoted to the National Housing Trust Fund. The report also recommends that the Protecting Tenants at Foreclosure Act become permanent, the right to counsel be assured for all housing cases, and federal agencies develop funding incentives for communities to stop the criminalization of homelessness.

To read the report card, [click here](#). For general inquiries, contact [Selam Aberra](#).

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The National Law Center on Homelessness and Poverty is a leader in the movement to prevent and end homelessness. To achieve its goal, the Law Center uses three main strategies: policy advocacy, public education, and impact litigation.