

Virtual side event - 56th session of the Human Rights Council

BREAKING THE CYCLE: ENDING THE CRIMINALIZATION OF HOMELESSNESS AND POVERTY

Tuesday 25 June 2024, 15:00-16:30 CET

Meeting link: <https://t.ly/Elsvl>



Across the world persons experiencing homelessness or poverty are penalized for performing life-sustaining activities such as sleeping, eating, sitting and hygiene-related conduct, as well as forms of economic survival, such as informal trade, begging, street-based sex work or waste collection. Penalties may involve fines, arrest or imprisonment. For those who cannot comply with the law for reasons of homelessness or extreme poverty these measures raise significant human rights concerns.

Guided by the [joint study on the decriminalization of homelessness](#) and poverty by the Special Rapporteurs on the right to adequate housing and on poverty and human rights, experts will discuss alternatives to criminalization and how laws and law enforcement could be reformed to avoid entrenching discrimination and social exclusion.

Speakers:

- **Mr. Balakrishnan Rajagopal**, UN Special Rapporteur on the right to adequate housing
- **Mr. Olivier De Schutter**, UN Special Rapporteur on extreme poverty and human rights
- **Ms. Zione Ntaba**, Judge of the High Court of Malawi
- **Ms. Annie Hudson-Price**, Office for Access to Justice, U.S. Department of Justice
- **Mr. Rob Robinson**, Community Organizer and Activist
- **Ms. Sandra Epal-Ratjen**, International Commission of Jurists

Moderator:

- **Ms. Leah Conklin**, Advocacy Director, The International Legal Foundation

Event co-sponsored by:





Mr. Balakrishnan Rajagopal is the UN Special Rapporteur on the right to adequate housing. He is professor of law and development at the Department of Urban Studies and Planning at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT). Mr. Rajagopal was also a member of the academic advisory committee that informed the UN Secretary-General's report on inclusive policies and programmes to address homelessness ([A/78/236](#)).



Mr. Olivier De Schutter is the UN Special Rapporteur on extreme poverty and human rights. A professor of law at UCLouvain and SciencesPo, Mr De Schutter was previously the Special Rapporteur on the right to food (2008 to 2014) and a member of the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (2015 to 2020). Prior to those appointments, he was Secretary-General of the International Federation for Human Rights (FIDH).



Ms. Zione Ntaba is an accomplished judge serving on the High Court of Malawi. She has previously worked for the Ministry of Justice as a prosecutor, civil litigator and legislative draftsman. Her legal interests are diverse and encompass various aspects of the law, with a focus on energy law, international law, constitutional law, and human rights law. She is passionate about gender, children, and disability rights.



Ms. Annie Hudson-Price serves as Senior Counsel at the U.S. Department of Justice's Office for Access to Justice (ATJ), where she focuses on criminal justice policy, including the intersection of economic justice and our criminal legal systems. Before joining ATJ, Annie worked for over a decade as a civil rights attorney, bringing impact litigation throughout the country to advance social, economic, and racial justice.



Mr. Rob Robinson is a former homeless community organizer and activist based in New York City. He works with social movements including the Landless Workers Movement in Brazil, Abahlali base Mjondolo in South Africa, the Platform of People Affected by Mortgages in Spain, and is the USA-Canada Coordinator of International Alliance of Inhabitants. In the U.S., he works on issues including, poverty and debt, police violence against the poor, and gentrification. Rob is an adjunct professor of Urbanism in the Design and Urban Ecology program at Parsons New School University.



Ms. Sandra Epal-Ratjen is the International Advocacy Director at the International Commission of Jurists (ICJ). Between 2015 and 2023, she served as the International Advocacy Director and Deputy Executive Director of Franciscans International (FI) and had worked with the ICJ as the Head of the Programme on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights. Previous to this, she worked for Food First Information and Action Network (FIAN) International.