

SOCHUM

Social, Humanitarian and Cultural Committee

TOPIC:

**Combating Forced
Evictions Resulting from
Urban Development
Projects**

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Table of Contents:

I. Committee Description:	2
A. Definition:	
B. Duties/Roles:	
C. Prominent Accomplishment:	
II. Introduction to topic:	4
A. Significance/Importance:	
B. Main Events:	
C. Link to SDGs:	
D. Link to the Theme:	
E. Link to Pillars of Good Governance:	
III- Subtopics:	9
A- Discussing the Ethics and Impact of the Term “Urban Cleansing”:	
B- Restricting UN and NGO Oversight in Urban Development Decisions as a Way to Protect Domestic Residents:	
IV-Main Actors:	11
V-Suggested Solutions:	15
VI- Questions to Consider, Tips, and Suggested Sites:	16
A. Questions to Consider:	
B. Tips:	
C. Suggested Sites:	
VII- Represented Countries:	18
VIII- Contact Info:	20
IX- President’s Note:	20
X-SGs’ Note:	21
XI-References:	23

I. Committee Description:

A. Definition:

Established in 1945, the Social, Humanitarian and Cultural Committee (SOCHUM) is the third committee of the United Nations General Assembly. It has contributed to the drafting of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, adopted in 1948. SOCHUM focuses on issues related to the protection and promotion of fundamental human rights that should be guaranteed to individuals worldwide, including the right to life, the freedom to express cultures, the right to participate in politics, protecting children's rights, and promoting social development.



SOCHUM also addresses issues affecting vulnerable groups, including the elderly, people with disabilities, victims of crime and those impacted by drugs. The committee works to promote peaceful and collaborative solutions to social, humanitarian and cultural issues.

Worldwide, SOCHUM examines human rights concerns, consults with experts, and cooperates with other United Nations bodies to develop resolutions that guide member states and strengthen their policies and practices. Additionally, SOCHUM undertakes studies and formulates recommendations to promote international cooperation and ensure the protection of fundamental freedoms for all.

B. Roles/Duties:

- **Discussing Humanitarian Issues:** Discusses human rights, humanitarian concerns, and social issues around the world.
- **Protecting Vulnerable Groups:** Addresses issues affecting women, refugees, displaced people, and other vulnerable groups.
- **Developing Solutions:** Delegates discuss and negotiate possible solutions to international social and humanitarian problems.
- **Encouraging International Cooperation:** Countries work together through consultations and negotiations to find solutions to shared problems
- **Creating Recommendations:** The Committee develops recommendations and resolutions to address social, humanitarian, and human rights issues. These resolutions are not legally binding, but they can encourage countries to take action.

Delegates will discuss measures to prevent forced evictions and protect people who are displaced from their homes.

C. Prominent accomplishments:

- SOCHUM held 81 drafting sessions to prepare and refine the text of the UDHR (Universal Declaration of Human Rights) before its historic adoption.
- The committee, serving as the pipeline for the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, established a global “bill of rights” for women.
- SOCHUM initiated and planned frameworks that led to the Convention on the Rights of the Child, which is the most ratified human rights treaty in history.

II. Introduction to topic:

A. Significance/Importance:

Forced evictions are a violation of human rights, as the right to housing is fundamental and should not be perceived as an obstacle. When urban development projects prefer property and land over human dignity, injustice occurs for those displaced. In addition, these displaced communities are usually forgotten and left without any relocation assistance. Even when relocation is provided, they move away from sources of income, schools, and more.

Combating this crisis forces city planners to focus on ethical standards and people-centered approaches that respect residents. This global issue should not just be a side issue that will be fixed someday or another, but instead, a main focus for all member states.

B. Main events:

1966 – International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR):

The International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR) was adopted in 1966 and officially came into force in 1976. It made several of the declarations in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights binding treaties for states that ratified them. Article 11 of the covenant recognizes the right of everyone to have access to adequate housing. For the states, this implies the responsibility to respect this right and gradually ensure it by preventing forced evictions.

1976 – Housing and Habitat: Held in Vancouver, The United Nations convened the First UN Conference on Human Settlements (Habitat I) in 1976, where housing issues were first

raised on the international stage. Governments realized the importance of the concept of adequate housing and sustainable human settlements for humanity as a whole. Habitat I promoted sustainable development and called for taking care of the vulnerable populations in all countries.

1996 – Habitat II Conference: The Habitat II meeting was held in Istanbul in 1996. The UN member states discussed international trends in human settlements, including the growth of slums and the inadequacy of social services in urban areas. At Habitat II, governments committed to promoting sustainable human settlements that would not displace vulnerable populations and meet the basic needs of society.

1997 – General Comment No. 7: Forced Evictions: In 1997, the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights adopted General Comment No. 7 on forced evictions. This document highlights the right to be free from forced evictions and the obligations of states to prevent them. The General Comment also describes various measures that should be taken by member states to prevent forced evictions, provide remedies to displaced persons, and compensate for any losses suffered. In addition, it provides clarification on what constitutes forced evictions and what actions the state should take when they occur.

2004 - 2008 – The Beijing Olympics: In order to prepare for the 2008 Olympic Games, Beijing demolished many shantytowns to construct sports facilities, hotels, and transportation infrastructure. Human rights groups estimate that hundreds of thousands of residents were displaced to make way for new developments. Beijing's municipal

government claimed that these disruptions were a small price to pay for hosting the games and that the capital would benefit significantly from the event's economic success.

2010 – The Delhi Commonwealth Games: To host the 2010 Commonwealth Games, Delhi planned to reconstruct the entire city and developed master plans that included removing many low-income residents. This project led to the displacement of thousands of residents and significantly changed the city's infrastructure. Despite the state's belief that organizing the games would help Delhi achieve international recognition and economic growth, many human rights organizations argue that ordinary Indians will suffer the most from these events.

2015 – Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs): In 2015, the United Nations General Assembly officially adopted the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, which includes 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Among other things, the SDGs commit states to developing sustainable cities and human settlements, providing access to affordable housing, and promoting sustainable lifestyles and consumption patterns. The SDGs emphasize the need for progress that is fair to all people and reduces inequality.

2016 – New Urban Agenda: Adopted within the framework of Habitat III in Quito, Ecuador, in 2016, the New Urban Agenda promotes sustainable urban development. It prioritizes the creation of cities and towns that are universally accessible, equitable, diverse, safe, resilient, and sustainable. The New Urban Agenda calls on nations to ensure that their planning processes are transparent and participatory, that development meets the needs of all members of society, and the rights of displaced populations are respected.

during redevelopment projects. This agenda has become one of the most influential policy frameworks in the field of sustainable urban development.

C. Link to SDGs:

- **SDG 1:** It is an important aspect of this topic, where its aim is to protect vulnerable groups from falling into poverty, with displacement being one of the biggest causes. So, without this goal, then displaced populations would not have justice, nor any rehabilitation brought to them.
- **SDG 16:** It truly supports the meaning behind this topic, as its expectations align with what the topic needs, including justice safeguards such as upholding the right to due process before eviction, strengthening institutions to uphold laws that protect housing rights, and lowering the amount of legal conflicts between developers, governments, and communities through coordinative and fair decision-making.

D. Link to the theme:

The agenda of combating forced eviction, resulting from urban development projects, reflects this year's conference theme “Yin and Yang: The Harmony in Opposites”, by highlighting the need to balance two competing priorities, the **urban development** and the **protection of human rights**.

While infrastructure projects, economic growth and urban renewal can improve cities and benefit society, they may also result in the displacement of vulnerable communities and the loss of homes, livelihoods and cultural identity.



Similarly, the debate surrounding the term “urban cleansing” presents contrasting perspectives with some viewing redevelopment as essential for progress and others, considering it as a violation of social justice and human dignity.

Accordingly, SOCHUM’s role is to find a balance between these different perspectives by encouraging solutions that support sustainable development while protecting the rights, dignity and well-being of affected communities. In doing, so the committee strives to ensure that progress does not come at the expense of human rights.

E. Link to Pillars of Good Governance:

Ethical Conduct: Ethical concerns should be at the center of forced relocations due to urban redevelopment. The government needs to make fair, responsible, and human decisions. While there is no doubt that redevelopment programs can offer significant advantages, they should not be prioritized over the well-being of the affected population. Consultations with residents should take place, and compensation along with alternative housing provisions must be considered in each case. Only then will the government be able to implement truly beneficial programs, as well as maintain public support.

Responsiveness in Governance: Responsiveness is a concept that presupposes one party takes into account the other’s interests. In this regard, it is essential to stress that any project of urban renewal should consider the affected party’s rights, address their interests, and ensure that those who agreed to relocation receive all the comforts they were used to before. This policy will increase the level of responsiveness between the two parties, which, in turn, will positively affect the degree of acceptance and trust and reduce social conflicts to a minimum, thus promoting social development.

III- Subtopics:

A- Discussing the Ethics and Impact of the Term “Urban Cleansing”:

The term “urban cleansing” has been used for years by policymakers, media outlets, and activists to describe or create municipal efforts to alter the demographic and physical composition of urban areas. The term usually refers to policies that seek to remove, relocate, or erase a specific group of



people or activities from city spaces. These actions are justified under goals of development, safety, economic growth, or sanitation. Commonly associated projects include forced evictions, relocation programs, redevelopment, and increased policing. Additionally, the term draws parallels to “ethnic cleansing”, which is why it carries very significant ethical weight. Proponents may frame such actions as necessary for order and public health. Some critics argue that the term exposes urban policy being used to exclude or criminalize poverty and difference, often impacting the poor, migrants, ethnic minorities, and more vulnerable groups.

Moreover, an estimated 1.6 billion people live in inadequate housing globally. Between 2000 and 2020, millions were forcibly evicted as part of slum clearance, development, and projects in cities across Asia, Africa, which shows the ethical dilemma of using “urban cleansing” as a way to help further develop urban areas. In addition, approximately 1 billion people are currently living in slums or informal settlements. These areas are targeted by demolition or relocation programs under safety justifications.



The discussion over “urban cleansing” has cities facing pressure from rapid urbanization, climate change, and economic decline. By 2050, 68% of the global population is projected to live in urban areas, placing enormous strain on housing and infrastructure. In response, many governments have turned to large-scale redevelopment as solutions. However, without international guidelines, this risks deepening inequality and violating human rights. Since urban policy is increasingly intersecting with migration and poverty, the international community must determine how to pursue sustainable cities without sacrificing one’s human rights.

As delegates, you must look beyond the definition of “urban cleansing”, and engage with its ethical and practical implications instead. Examine the tension between a state's right to develop and its obligation to guard international human rights laws that include the right to adequate housing and protection. Delegates are encouraged to not only embrace their own stance, but also consider alternatives that address similar proposals.

B- Restricting UN and NGO Oversight in Urban Development Decisions as a Way to Protect Domestic Residents:

The question of who has authority over urban development has become contested. In response to growing involvement by the UN, international NGOs and donor organizations have moved to restrict external oversight of domestic urban projects. However, an argument made is that such restrictions are necessary to protect national sovereignty, cultural identity, and the rights of domestic residents. It is contended that external actors often lack local context and impose one-size-fits-all solutions, using human rights or development funding as leverage to influence policy.



On the other hand, critics argue that limiting UN and NGO oversight reduces transparency and accountability in urban development. It is warned that without independent monitoring, projects are more likely to result in forced evictions, corruption, and the abuse of vulnerable groups. Human rights organizations also assert that international oversight provides essential protection for residents being affected by redevelopment, specifically when domestic legal cases are weak or poorly enforced.



The tension between both sides reflects a debate within the international system: the balance between state sovereignty and the responsibility to uphold human rights standards. As urbanization grows and development funds become more conditional, the role of external actors in city planning has implications for housing and civic participation. With that, the committee must consider whether restricting that oversight protects domestic residents, or whether it removes safeguards that are designed to protect them.

In this conference, you are expected to evaluate the pros and cons of restricting external oversight in urban development. You should compare the act of national sovereignty against obligations regarding human rights and accountability. You need to propose tangible solutions that allow states to keep control over policy while ensuring that the flow of development remains constant.

IV-Main Actors:

1. Brazil:

Brazil is strongly connected to forced eviction through the redevelopment of major cities, particularly Rio de Janeiro. In preparation for the 2014 FIFA World Cup and 2016 Olympic Games, large infrastructure in urban renewal projects resulted in the relocation of thousands of residents, particularly those living in low-income communities. These

evictions become controversial because of concerns over inadequate consultation, compensation and relocation. Brazil's longer history also includes significant inequality and access to urban land and housing, making the country an important example of the conflict between urban development and housing rights.

2. India:

India has experienced extensive displacement as a result of rapid urbanization infrastructure, and redevelopment. Delhi's preparations for the 2010 Commonwealth Games led to the demolition of informal settlements and displacement of thousands of residents. Mumbai's ongoing development, including projects involving Dharavi, has also raised questions about the conditions of low-income communities living in vulnerable urban areas. India's history of rapid population growth and urban expansion has created an ongoing challenge of providing infrastructure and housing while preventing vulnerable communities from being displaced.

3. China:

China's connection to the topic comes largely from its extreme, rapid urbanization and large-scale redevelopment. Before the 2008 Beijing Olympics, residential areas were demolished, and residents were relocated to make space for Olympic venues, roads, and other infrastructure. China has also carried out extensive urban development across other major cities as its economy and population have expanded. These projects have

transformed cities on an enormous scale, but have also raised questions about compensation, relocation, consultation with affected communities, and the rights of residence affected by redevelopment.

4. South Africa:

South Africa has one of the most significant historical connections to forced development because of apartheid. During apartheid, laws such as the Group Areas Act of 1950 divided cities according to race and resulted in the forced removal of large numbers of Black South Africans and other racial groups from areas designed for white residents. Communities are relocated to Townships and other areas often far from employment and essential services. Although apartheid ended in 1994, its legacy continues to influence South Africa's patterns of housing, inequality and urban segregation. This history is particularly relevant to the debate surrounding the term "urban cleansing"

5. Nigeria:

Nigeria, particularly Lagos, has experienced major conflict between urban development and informal communities. Lagos has rapidly expanded into one of Africa's largest cities leading to large infrastructure and redevelopment projects. In places, such as Otodogbe, thousands of residents were forcibly removed as waterfront areas were cleared for redevelopment. These cases generated significant criticism because residents reportedly received limited notice and inadequate alternative housing. Therefore, Lagos demonstrates that rapid efforts to transform the city can involve communities at risk of displacement.

6. Kenya:

Kenya's most relevant example is Nairobi, where a large portion of the population lives in informal settlements. As the city has expanded, some communities have faced eviction because their settlements occupy land needed for roads, railways, commercial development, or other infrastructure. Nairobi's history of informal settlement is closely connected to colonial-era land policies, post-independence urban migration, and unequal access to formal housing. The situation demonstrates how insecure land tenure can make low-income communities practically vulnerable to development-related displacement. .

7. Turkey:

Turkey has experienced significant urban transformation, particularly in Istanbul, where older and lower income neighborhoods have been redeveloped. Some projects have involved replacing older housing with modern residential and commercial developments. This has led to concerns about the residents, being displaced from established communities and losing access to affordable housing. Istanbul's transformation reflects the broader challenge of modernizing rapidly growing cities while preserving existing communities and preventing development from disproportionately affecting lower income residents.

8. The United States of America:

The United States provides an important historical example through its urban renewal programs of the 20th century. From the 1950s onward, governments cleared numerous neighborhoods to construct highways, commercial districts, public buildings, and new housing. These projects frequently affected low-income communities and communities of

color, resulting in significant displacement. The construction of highways through neighborhoods such as Black Bottom in Detroit and Claiborne Avenue in New Orleans are examples of how urban planning decisions reshaped communities. Today, The US continues to face debate surrounding gentrification, rising housing costs, and displacement.

V-Suggested Solutions:

- Compensation must go further than property value. States should implement a payment of market value plus an additional disturbance allowance within 90 days of eviction. Additionally, establish a Livelihood Restoration Fund providing funds to households along with job training and basic life necessities for a year after relocation.
- Urban development projects must not proceed without an independent eviction impact test completed. This test should identify all affected groups, households, and workers. No international funding or action should be taken or approved until the report is published and reviewed by the affected communities.
- Create an independent role at the national level with authority to stop projects, look into complaints, and implement penalties for violations. UN-Habitat should also maintain a public global database of all evictions.
- Conduct social and human rights impact assessments before approving any development projects which may lead to community displacement.
- Encourage member states to obtain voluntary help from the appropriate UN agencies and non-governmental organizations while still retaining national control over their own decisions regarding urban development.

- Provide fair compensation together with appropriate alternative housing to those residents displaced by urban development projects.

VI- Question to Consider, Tips and Suggested Sites:

A. Questions to Consider:

- How can the government balance urban development with residents' right to adequate housing?
- Under what circumstances, if any, can the relocation of residents be justified in urban redevelopment?
- What legal protections should be provided to communities facing displacement because of urban development?
- How can governments ensure that displaced residents receive adequate compensation, alternative housing, and relocation assistance?
- What is your country's current position on forced evictions caused by urban development projects?
- What laws or policies does your country have to protect residents from unfair displacement or forced eviction?
- How has your country handled cases where urban development has displaced low-income or vulnerable communities?
- What solutions would your country support at the international level to prevent human rights violations caused by urban development and displacement?

B. Tips:

- Understand the difference between evictions and forced evictions.

- Prepare questions beforehand to help open debates.
- Attempt to remain diplomatic at all times.
- Make sure to understand your delegation's stance thoroughly.
- Be aware of most countries and their positions in the conference.
- Have a prepared idea of your bloc beforehand.
- Be aware of unreliable and credible sources to either avoid or rely on.
- Always be respectful.

C. Suggested Sites:

- <https://digitallibrary.un.org/>
- <https://www.un.org/en/ga/third/>
- https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/Documents/Issues/Housing/Guide_forced_eviction_EN.pdf
- https://www.ohchr.org/Documents/Issues/Housing/Guidelines_en.pdf
- <https://unhabitat.org/>
- <https://sdgs.un.org/goals/goal11>
- <https://www.un.org/en/about-us/un-charter/full-text>
- https://legal.un.org/repertory/art2_7.shtml
- <https://unhabitat.org/topic/urban-governance>
- <https://unhabitat.org/enabling-meaningful-public-participation-in-spatial-planning-processes>

VII-Represented Countries:

Asia	1. India 2. China 3. Turkey 4. United Arab Emirates 5. Bangladesh 6. Sri Lanka 7. Indonesia 8. Japan 9. Vietnam 10. South Korea 11. Cambodia 12. Mozambique 13. Lebanon 14. Kuwait 15. Saudi Arabia
Africa	16. South Africa 17. Nigeria 18. Kenya 19. Egypt 20. Ethiopia 21. Rwanda

	22. Tanzania
South America	23. Brazil 24. Peru 25. Venezuela 26. Colombia 27. Argentina
North America	28. United States 29. Canada 30. Mexico 31. Guatemala
Europe	32. United Kingdom 33. France 34. Germany 35. Greece 36. Spain 37. Hungary 38. Portugal 39. Belgium 40. Italy

VIII- Contact Info:

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IX-President's Note:

Hello delegates and welcome to the 15th HHHSMUN!

I am so glad you all chose to join this year's SOCHUM committee. I am your president, Lamar Sakka! I am truly so excited to see some passionate, curious, and determined delegates, sharing their ideas and challenging one another. I want you all to make the most of this conference, make memories, support one another, make friends, and do not be afraid to step outside your comfort zone. That's how you usually get the best memories. I hope you all enjoy this conference to the maximum. I am thrilled to see what you have to offer.

Enjoy this journey delegates, make the most of it.

Lamar Sakka

X-SGs' Note:

Dear Delegates,

As your Secretary-Generals, we hope this background guide gives you a strong foundation for the discussions ahead and helps you approach your committee with confidence. Beyond preparation, this conference is an opportunity to challenge yourself, step into new perspectives, and take part in conversations that demand thought and initiative.

This year's theme, "Yin and Yang: The Harmony in Opposites", reflects the idea that opposing sides can exist in balance, whether between conflict and cooperation or speaking and listening. It reminds us that meaningful progress often begins when we learn to understand perspectives different from our own.

As Leo Buscaglia said, "Change is the end result of all true learning," and we hope this experience leaves you with a stronger sense of the value your voice can carry. We cannot wait to meet you and see what you bring to this conference.

Warm regards,

The 15th HHHSMUN Secretary Generals,

Mia, Hani and Omar

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United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs Goal 11: Sustainable cities and communities United Nations Sustainable Development Goals <https://sdgs.un.org/goals/goal11>

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United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights Special Rapporteur on the right to adequate housing <https://www.ohchr.org/en/special-procedures/sr-housing>