

Press Release

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Right to housing: Two collective complaints concerning France

Strasbourg, 13.09.2007 – The Council of Europe's European Committee of Social Rights is holding a public hearing on the merits of two complaints concerning France related to the right to housing. The hearing will take place at 11am on Monday 17 September in Strasbourg (Hearing Room II, Palais des Droits de l'Homme).

The international movement ATD Fourth World alleges a violation of Article 16 (right of the family to social, legal and economic protection), Article 30 (right to protection against poverty and social exclusion) and Article 31 (right to housing) alone or in combination with Article E (non-discrimination) of the Revised European Social Charter.

In particular, ATD Fourth World considers that the French procedure on the prevention of evictions is flawed and that there is a lack of social housing; the organisation contests the way in which social housing is allocated to the poorest people and argues firstly that appeal procedures are too lengthy in cases involving delays in allocation and also that the situation is discriminatory, in particular with regard to families living in poverty.

The European Federation of National Organisations Working with the Homeless (FEANTSA) alleges a violation of Article 31 (the right to housing) of the Revised European Social Charter.

In particular, it considers that the measures in place in France to reduce the number of homeless people are insufficient, that the construction of social housing is inadequate and that a significant number of households live in poor housing conditions, notably with regard to sanitation and overcrowding, and argues that the implementation of legislation on the prevention of evictions is dysfunctional.

The Federation also alleges that the system for allocating social housing and the associated remedies do not function properly and that there is discrimination in access to housing with regard to immigrants.

The Committee will discuss the complaints after the hearing. It will adopt a decision on the merits, which it will forward to the parties concerned and the Committee of Ministers in a report which will be made public no later than four months after the hearing.

Paul Bouchet, former president of ATD Fourth World, will be present at the hearing.

Link to the Social Charter website : http://www.coe.int/T/E/Human_Rights/Esc/

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