

Most of world's 200 million migrants denied basic right to housing – UN expert



Migrant workers send home money to their families

22 October 2010 – With most of the world's estimated 200 million migrants facing discrimination in housing, a United Nations independent expert today called on nations to view the issue through the lens of human rights.

Raquel Rolnik, the Special Rapporteur on the right to adequate housing, told reporters that in her work, she has seen first-hand the "situations of migrant workers living in metal containers without electricity or water or services," as well as others sleeping in bathrooms, closets or the kitchen.

They are also oftentimes subject to violence, sexual harassment and forced confinement, she told reporters in New York after briefing the General Assembly on her latest report.

Migrants are sometimes obliged to live in unserviced, unplanned settlements within or on the outskirts of cities because of the impossibility of accessing public housing or due to discrimination they face in the private market, the expert said.

The "inadequate and often appalling" housing conditions migrants face can only be redressed through a "truly human rights-based approach which is based on international human rights law that protects the rights to adequate housing of international migrants and prohibits discriminatory, unfair and degrading treatment," she stressed.

Migration, Ms. Rolnik said, is seen as a security issue by government and is handled by law enforcement agencies. Barriers on the free flow of people "don't contribute to reduce the number of migrants, but they certainly contribute to increase their vulnerability to discrimination" and other crimes, such as smuggling and trafficking.

Also speaking at the same press conference today was Abdelhamid El Jamri, who chairs the **Committee on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families**.

He told reporters that to date, the International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families has been ratified by 43 States.

However, Mr. El Jamri, who also briefed the Assembly today, voiced regret that to date, no country of receipt has ratified the pact.

The Committee, he said, "has seen that there is a move from considering only the economic dimensions of migration towards a more rights-oriented approach to migrant workers."

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