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**UN Expert to Shine International Spotlight on New Orleans' Housing Crisis in Upcoming US Mission**

NEW ORLEANS---Amid a global economic recession precipitated by the U.S. sub-prime lending crisis, the United Nations Special Rapporteur on Adequate Housing will visit New Orleans as part of the office's first official mission to the U.S. The October 30th-31st visit to New Orleans will investigate the foreclosure crisis, growing homelessness, and concerns around affordable housing with respect to public housing and rental assistance.

Special Rapporteur Raquel Rolnik will be visiting various parts of the city and speaking with residents impacted by:

The depletion of affordable housing since Katrina, as today the rental market in New Orleans has experienced a rise in the average rent of 46%; Homelessness rates that have doubled since Katrina to an estimated 12,000 despite a reduction in the city's overall population; Over 65,000 vacant properties that account for a third of the addresses in the city, the highest rate in the nation; The demolition and redevelopment of New Orleans' Big Four public housing developments that will eliminate 3832 public housing units.

During her tour of New Orleans, the Special Rapporteur will meet with local officials, conduct site visits, and receive testimony from residents at a 6:30 PM town hall meeting on October 30th at St. Bernard Community Church at 3938 St. Bernard Avenue. She will be available to the press at 1:30 PM on October 30th prior to a 2:00 PM meeting at City Hall.

The UN Special Rapporteur on the Right to Adequate Housing travels internationally to observe whether governments are protecting the globally recognized human right to housing. In addition to investigating the impact of the economic recession on the American housing crisis, Ms. Rolnik will examine government action—including demolishing public housing, cutting funding for other affordable housing options, and permitting an unregulated mortgage industry—that has undermined access to housing for many Americans.

"I hope the mission in the U.S. will help to open a dialogue in communities across the country among residents, their community organizations, and their political representatives towards making adequate housing a right for all Americans," the Special Rapporteur said.

Ms. Rolnik's New Orleans visit is being organized by local organizations including Mayday New Orleans, Unity of Greater New Orleans, Southeastern Louisiana Legal Services, New Orleans Workers' Center for Racial Justice, C3/Hands Off Iberville, Louisiana Justice Institute, Committee to Re-Open Charity Hospital, Social and Economic Rights Advocates of Tulane University, the International Law Society of Loyola University Law School, and others.

"This mission gives us hope, because it shows that even if our government doesn't view adequate housing as a human right, there are people around the country and the world that do," said Sam Jackson from Mayday New Orleans.

“The housing crisis in New Orleans is not getting addressed by the government, mayor or city council.”  
Said Kawana Jasper, a local housing rights activist.

The Special Rapporteur’s New Orleans visit is part of a U.S. State Department-approved national mission that will tour urban and rural communities, including New York, NY; Chicago, IL; Washington, DC; Los Angeles, CA; and the Pine Ridge Indigenous Reservation in South Dakota. Ms. Rolnik will present the findings of her mission to the UN General Assembly in a public report on the human right to housing in the U.S.

For more information on the United Nations Special Rapporteur on the Right to Adequate Housing’s New Orleans stop, please visit <http://restorehousingrights.org>.