

NESRI's Statement on FEMA Trailer Evictions

(June 1, 2009) -- Today the Federal Emergency Management Agency is scheduled to evict thousands of Gulf Coast hurricane survivors currently living in temporary trailers. According to press reports, the decision-making process around the evictions lacked community participation and engagement. Moreover, a clear plan to provide adequate housing for the displaced has not been presented. These actions directly contradict safeguards outlined in the UN Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement, including the right to participation and housing.

If carried out, these forced evictions will have disastrous results for some of the most vulnerable hurricane survivors. Those who will be evicted from the trailers have no other housing options – hence, they have opted to remain in the trailers despite the serious health concerns they pose, including dangerous levels of formaldehyde. Evicting them without any support and absent a plan for alternative housing will undoubtedly lead to increased vulnerability for this population. Studies indicate the physical, social and emotional impacts of serial displacement.

This policy falters under a human rights analysis. As the US government applies the UN's Guiding Principles in its work overseas, we ask that the government discontinue the planned forced evictions and develop a housing strategy that is both participatory and responsive to the needs of survivors seeking to rebuild their lives.