

## [International Tenants' Day Brings Struggle Abroad and at Home](#)

by Paul Hogarth, Oct. 03, 2006

Today is International Tenant's Day, as proclaimed by the [International Union of Tenants \(IUT\)](#), a coalition of 54 members associations in 44 countries that is dedicated to safeguard tenants' rights. Based out of Stockholm, Sweden, the IUT publishes a quarterly magazine ("Global Tenant") that publicizes tenant struggles throughout the world, conducts seminars on tenant issues, and works in partnership with various United Nations agencies, including the UN Economic Commission for Europe and the UN Center for Human Settlements.

The struggle for tenants' rights and eviction protections is truly international. In Nigeria, 800,000 people have been rendered homeless through evictions in 49 settlements from 2003-2006. In Prague, tenants who have been evicted from their flats must themselves show proof to the Court that the order is without a valid reason – the landlord does not need to show proof in the first instance. In Pakistan, the construction of the Lyari Expressway in Karachi will have rendered 250,000 people homeless. In Poland, effective ways of getting rid of "troublesome" tenants include dismantling of railings, disconnecting electricity and cutting off water supply and heating.

Here in San Francisco, a coalition of housing activists will hold a press conference at Noon in front of City Hall to stand in solidarity with tenants throughout the world – and to highlight support for Proposition H on the November ballot. "IUT is calling for an end to unjust evictions worldwide," said Ted Gullicksen of the San Francisco Tenants Union, "and it's a worldwide problem that is particularly acute here in San Francisco. We see hundreds of units and thousands of tenants evicted every year." In the last five years, 1100 rental units have been lost in San Francisco due to no-fault evictions.

For tenants who have been evicted, relocating to another place can be prohibitively expensive – or else a one-way ticket out of San Francisco. While a newly vacated two-bedroom apartment in 1996 went for about \$1200/month, a tenant who is evicted today will have to pay over \$2200/month for a similar unit – plus last month's rent and a security deposit. But the amount for relocation assistance that tenants are currently entitled to was set in 1996 at \$1000 – and never increased. Adapting to the new challenges that tenants face today, Prop H will increase the relocation amount to \$4500 – and an additional \$3000 for elderly or disabled tenants, or families with children. It enjoys broad support from groups and individuals like the San Francisco Democratic Party, Senator Carole Migden, SEIU Local 790, Senior Action Network, and a majority of the Board of Supervisors.

Not only is Proposition H consistent with the spirit of International Tenants' Day, it clearly follows the guidelines of international law. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights (which all countries who wish to join the United Nations must sign) declares housing to be a basic human right. The International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights recognizes the right to adequate housing – including the right to be free from arbitrary forced evictions. And the UN International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights complements the right not to be forcefully evicted with adequate protections such as relocation assistance.

At today's meeting of the Board of Supervisors, San Francisco Supervisor Ross Mirkarimi will issue a Proclamation to honor International Tenants' Day. While the city struggles with the affordable housing crisis for tenants at home, it is imperative to make common cause with the struggles of tenants abroad. Proposition H will be one small step towards accomplishing the goal of eradicating unjust evictions worldwide.