

INTERNATIONAL ALLIANCE OF INHABITANTS

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PRESS RELEASE:

World Habitat Day, Naples, 2nd October: without the inhabitants, we have no chance. Why were social organisations prevented from attending the demonstration?

World "Zero Eviction" Day: for the IAI, a glimmer of hope for the right to housing and citizenship.

Today, World Habitat Day was held in Naples. This year, the United Nations chose the theme "Towns – symbols of hope", to highlight the significance of rural-urban migration.

This year's World Habitat Day took place in the run up to the World Zero Eviction Days coordinated by the International Alliance of Inhabitants. The Days will see a large number of demonstrations take place in many Russian towns, demonstrations organised by residents of public housing. In tandem with this, in Barcelona, 15,000 people marched for the right to housing, and in Paris, a similar number came together to call for the rehousing of the illegal immigrants of Cachan, whose eviction caused a national scandal in France this summer.

"Migration and urbanisation are key issues. However, UN-Habitat's approach, which favours the intervention of corporations and institutions, can only partly resolve the problems – it is destined for failure" explains Cesare Ottolini, coordinator of the International Alliance of Inhabitants. "Towns are undeniably an attractive prospect for many people, but today, more than a billion people are affected by housing precariousness. This is evident from the floods of letters and complaints that the IAI's international alert system has received in the past few years. We hear about evictions and demolitions taking place all over the world, and not just in poor countries. It's a serious problem, one which affects 15% of the world's population. It's caused by foreign investment in high-debt countries, the privatisation and liberalisation of the housing sector, ethnic cleansing, wars, territorial occupation, and humans capitalising on natural disasters. And while articles 7-11 of the United Nations Millennium Declaration claim that the living conditions of 100 million people will be improved by 2020, more realistic forecasts suggest that an additional 700 million will be living in shanty towns by then. Given the sheer force of globalisation and the weakness of the UN's policies, the very reasonable expectation stipulated in articles 7-11 looks set to become but a pipe dream, as highlighted at the recent World Urban Forum in Vancouver.

"Why did UN-Habitat and the Commune of Naples organise an event of this scale, invite members of the government, town councillors, universities, even the Association of Builders and Developers, and then singularly fail to invite social organisations and the residents themselves, those that really make a difference to urban life? It's these residents that have consistently shown themselves capable of formulating and implementing fresh, alternative urban and housing policies.

"Why has UN-Habitat not rewarded Alex Zanotelli, representative of the 'W Nairobi W' campaign?" asks Cesare. "Everyone else seems to want to recognise his achievements. He organised a campaign involving some 300,000 people, in which evictions and demolitions were (sometimes physically) halted, and through this managed to convince the Italian and Kenyan governments to sit down and discuss the transformation of Kenya's debt into a fund which would be used primarily to improve conditions in two shanty towns."

The coordinator of the IAI continues: "Building new towns is a possibility, but only with the introduction of a new social pact founded on the rights and participation of all – in particular the inhabitants.

"This is why the IAI has organised the Zero Eviction Days, after discussions held at the various Social Forums, the World Urban Forum, and Africities, not to mention a number of regional meetings. These Days enable us to draw attention to our cause, and develop links of solidarity. It also enables us to highlight the declaration common to the IAI and the International Union of Tenants (one of the oldest tenant associations, which has recently decided to base its International Tenants' Day around the theme of 'No more unwarranted evictions! No more inhuman evictions!'), the appeal made by the IAI, No-Vox and the HIC (Habitat International Coalition) during the European Social Forum in Athens, and finally HIC's declaration against privatisations and evictions made at World Habitat Day.

"All this represents a certain convergence of opinion which we hope will lead to the creation of a common front, capable of proposing and implementing urban and housing policies in time for the next Zero Eviction Days" concludes Cesare.


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Notable events:

- Rome, 4th and 8th October, for the abrogation of Law 431/98 on rented accommodation
- Barcelona, 16th and 17th October, during the European Housing Ministers' Summit

 [Cesare Ottolini of the International Alliance of Habitants inaugurates the series of World “Zero Eviction” Days and talks about the institutional day of human establishments in Naples \(in Italian\)](#)

 [The World Zero Eviction Days appeal for the right to housing](#)

More info : www.habitants.org