

The Zero Evictions Marathon 2024: a successful event of academia and global civic society

The "Marathon", promoted by the Centre for Human Rights of the University of Padua (Italy) and the International Alliance of Inhabitants, presented, over more than 10 hours of live streaming on Zoom and YouTube, contributions provided by 26 civil society organizations (associations, federations, foundations, grassroots groups), researchers from the universities of Padua and Buenos Aires, as well as the United Nations Special Rapporteur on the right to adequate housing.

The contributions and testimonies concerned situations and struggles in India, the Philippines, Italy, Greece, Spain, Portugal, Romania and various other European countries, Turkey, USA, Argentina, Colombia, Chile, Peru, Brazil, Venezuela, Ecuador, Uruguay. Speakers presented the international legal framework on the right to adequate housing and on the general prohibition of forced eviction, a measure that inevitably affects a series of human rights of the most vulnerable subjects; the condition of the homeless, and in particular their right to health; the initiatives to bring the right to housing to the attention of states within the framework of the Universal Periodic Review; the project to map the violence related to displacements and forced evictions in the countries of the Middle East and North Africa. Special Rapporteur Balakrishnan Rajagopal underlined the connection of the right to adequate housing with many other human rights, including the right to land, and the crucial role its protection has national social policies and in the fight against discrimination. The cultural association Abracalam of Padua has contributed to the program with a dramatized reading of the intertwined stories of conflict and coexistence set in a building of an imaginary city, that reflected the crises and contradictions of our time. The readings were taken from the novel "Convivenze" authored by Norberto Presta, who also participated in the reading.

The day was the culmination of a journey that in just over three months (the project was launched in July 2024) mobilised a large number of organisations, groups, activists and victims of violations of the fundamental right to adequate housing. Although not everyone was able to produce a video or organize a live communication for the marathon, everyone deserves our sincere thanks and congratulations.

The Marathon demonstrated the importance and interest in sharing information about old and new challenges that threaten the right to adequate housing: the financialization of the market, environmental disasters caused by global warming, evictions motivated by urban or industrial development plans that do not take into account the rights of the most vulnerable groups and the cultural and human values of which the poor and disadvantaged communities are bearers, the destruction resulting from armed conflicts and the nefarious consequences of anti-democratic policies that attack dissent and freedom of association and penalize, instead of protecting, human rights defenders. In the same way, however, the Marathon has made it possible to make known and share good practices and tools of struggle, to strengthen feelings of solidarity across the planet, to bind together communities that may never meet but that have in common the experience of actively resisting violations of the right to live in decent housing.

P. De Stefani