



International Committee for October 17

UNITED FOR
PEACE AND
HUMAN RIGHTS



INTERNATIONAL
DAY for the
ERADICATION
OF POVERTY
17 OCTOBER



SAFE HOMES FOR ALL

CONCEPT NOTE

BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT

“When a person no longer enjoys human rights, it means they were killed years ago, even if we can still see them breathing.”

— Philemon K., DRC

“When my rights are abandoned, I feel that there is no need for me to live in this world, because it is no longer for me and others like me.”

— Venance M., Tanzania

October 17 — the International Day for the Eradication of Poverty (IDEP) — is a powerful global platform to affirm the indivisibility of human rights. The 2026–2028 umbrella theme, United for Peace and Human Rights, responds to a world marked by rising armed conflict and persisting institutional violence against people in poverty. Peace requires justice, social protection, and democratic participation — not merely the absence of war.

“Human dignity is undermined every day by extreme poverty, insecurity, forced displacement, and the collapse of essential services.”

— Collective contribution, Haiti

“Armed conflicts are the main factor behind the constant internal displacement of populations. These displacements force people to live in unacceptable conditions and deprive them of their rights to decent housing, to their natural resources, and to the land of their ancestors.”

— Collective contribution, DRC

“Claiming one’s rights becomes a real headache — a path full of obstacles that must be deciphered.”

— Nathalie M., France

“Loud calls for rearmament and militarisation greatly damage poverty-elimination targets.”

— Martin B., Ireland

This three-year period coincides with a series of landmark anniversaries that create a unique opportunity to renew collective commitment to peace and human rights:

- 2026: 40th Anniversary of the Declaration of the Right to Development; 50th Anniversary of the Vancouver Declaration on Human Settlements (1976) — the first international definition of adequate shelter; 60th Anniversary of the ICESCR and ICCPR — the twin covenants enshrining economic, social, civil, and political rights.
- 2027: 40th Anniversary of October 17 commemorations.
- 2028: 80th Anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR).

These anniversaries must serve not merely as commemorative moments, but as catalysts to advance the Doha Plan of Action and to affirm that human rights obligations must take priority in policy decisions and budget choices.

“Every person deserves the basic necessities to live in dignity.”

— Gracy F., India

“Human dignity is the foundation of peace, justice, and sustainable development.”

— Stephanie M., DRC

“Human rights are not abstract principles to us. They are: being able to earn honestly and plan for tomorrow; being treated fairly by financial institutions; having access to markets, schools, and healthcare; being consulted rather than blamed; and knowing that our children have real opportunity.”

— Doug F., Australia

“Even if someone is on the street or near a rubbish bin, that person is still human — like you and me.”

— Adama, Burkina Faso

“Human rights are words on the same coin, which must be embraced by all and for all.”

— Josephine A., Nigeria

“Human rights apply to all human beings, regardless of place of residence, culture, or status. No one can be deprived of these rights, and no one can give them up.”

— Kévin M., Central African Republic

2026 FOCUS: SAFE HOMES FOR ALL

The 2026 thematic focus, Safe Homes for All, is both timely and urgent. More than 2.8 billion people face some form of housing inadequacy — including 1.1 billion in informal settlements (UN-Habitat) and at least 330 million experiencing absolute homelessness (Institute of Global Homelessness). This burden falls most heavily on those already excluded: people on low incomes, women, children, older persons, persons with disabilities, migrants, refugees, and racial and ethnic minorities.

“I was homeless as a teenager, which was hard to endure — and then again with my children and spouse.”

— Rosetta S., USA

“I know women living under bridges — some expelled by their husbands, ending up on the street; others sleeping in the market after it closes. Society has abandoned these people as if they do not exist.”

— Zakaria, Burkina Faso

“Around me, some people sleep in tunnels because they have no home. It is material poverty, but also psychological poverty.”

— Collective contribution, Madagascar

“Women’s homelessness is a serious issue, especially for women with children, because it is above all a safety issue.”

— Caroline M., Scotland

“We need a homeland and a safe home that embraces us and makes us feel secure and at peace.”

— Nouredine S., Palestine

“We are not born into poverty, but those who live in it must unite to fight it. Poverty is like a deep pit — it is felt in our veins; it has weakened people.”

— Élise, Burkina Faso

“In Tripoli, residents of a condemned building knew the danger but did not leave, having nowhere to go and no guarantee of safety. Eventually, the building collapsed on them. They had no way to protect themselves.”

— Randa, Lebanon

“Some buildings are constructed anarchically and are unfit for habitation. Damp, for example, is harmful to the health of occupants.”

— Caroline, Lebanon

Homelessness and inadequate housing show how quickly people lose access to basic rights when housing becomes unaffordable or inaccessible. Without a secure home, it becomes nearly impossible to exercise other rights or participate fully in society.

“Finding housing is becoming increasingly difficult; even studio apartments are sometimes unaffordable.” “I lost two friends who died in stairwells, in basements, in Fribourg, over the past 20 years.”

— Martine F., Switzerland

“Without a stable roof over one’s head, access to other rights becomes illusory. Land insecurity is not merely an urban planning issue; it is a form of social violence that paralyses health, education, and security.”

— Toussaint B., Chad

“I believe there is enough to accommodate everyone, but greed and self-centredness have resulted in the accumulation of resources where none should be hoarded.”

— Evanbe T., Cameroon

“Young people who work but cannot afford their own housing must remain at home. When the household receives a social benefit, the young person’s salary is counted in the household income and the benefit is reduced. The young person cannot keep their full salary, the parents receive less, and no one can save for the future.”

— Monette B., Luxembourg

“When a person lacks stable housing, their whole life is destabilised: employment, health, children’s schooling, and social life.”

— Stéphanie R., France

“Every human being has the right to live in secure housing.”

— Rehema M., Tanzania

“Young people end up on the streets, couples and families are separated due to overcrowding, and elderly people can no longer remain in their homes.”

— Patricia Adele F., Mauritius

Housing systems increasingly exclude people in poverty. When land and homes are treated as investment assets rather than social goods, people are pushed into unsafe, overcrowded, or precarious conditions — not by choice, but by the failure of housing systems to serve human needs.

“When dignity is absent from the state’s decisions, human rights are commercialised and benefit only a few, excluding those living in extreme misery.”

— Elvira Cantillo, Colombia

“Housing is treated as a business rather than a right. What is needed is a genuine policy ensuring access to housing for everyone — as a right, not a commercial transaction.”

— Elena F., Belgium

“To access social housing, you must have capital beyond what those in poverty can afford. This always favours the wealthy.”

— Collective contribution, Côte d'Ivoire

Homelessness and inadequate housing are manifestations of exclusion, inequality, and unequal power. The right to adequate housing must be understood as « safe homes » a fundamental right that relates to human dignity, equality, peace, and the conditions necessary for communities to live in a safe and sustainable habitat.

“A home is not just four walls: it is a place where one feels safe, a space adapted to one’s needs, somewhere one can be oneself without fear or excessive dependence — a place to rest, receive others, and build one’s life.”

— Person with reduced mobility, France

“A home means being warm, feeling safe, being able to close the door and not feel the stress of the outside world. A home means food and a place to make a drink so you are able to cope the next day.”

— Amanda B., UK

“A right to a home means not only having a house to live in, but a safe and long-term place to live, with access to basic necessities such as clean water, work, electricity, and freedom from harassment.”

— Ferdinand L., the Philippines

“The notion of home encompasses not only adequate shelter but also the emotional and social bonds among household members that create a genuine sense of belonging.”

— Niramul N., Thailand

CALL TO ACTION

The Doha Political Declaration (paragraph 13) reaffirms the right to an adequate standard of living, including safe, accessible, and affordable housing, drinking water, and equitable sanitation.

“The world belongs to everyone, so everyone has the right to a home, and to live on this earth and use the resources and food it produces. There should be a fairer distribution of food and all other means of existence.”

— Collective contribution, Netherlands

“If we join forces to fight for human rights, we can bring about change.”

— Shabina Digaga, Tanzania

“Building a sustainable world requires shifting from charity to partnership. People living in poverty already contribute through labour, community solidarity, and resilience during crises.”

— Shahidul I., Bangladesh

States have binding obligations under international law — human rights are not aspirations but enforceable commitments. In implementing the Doha Political Plan of Action, we call on governments to:

1. Meet their human rights obligations to ensure they respect, protect, and progressively fulfil the right to safe homes for all, and ensure that the realisation of a dignified life for all takes first priority in policy decisions and budget choices.
2. Address power imbalances and move from tokenistic participation to inclusive deliberation. This means co-designing housing policies with people experiencing poverty and exclusion, recognising them as rights-holders and knowledge-holders who are indispensable to democratic life.
3. Expand public fiscal space and deploy these resources to realise safe homes for all, ensuring that no one is left behind.

“People living in poverty — or in extreme poverty — are in a constant search for a better life. They are too often forgotten in decision-making. Policies for the poor must be made with the poor, not without them. As the saying goes: ‘Everything done for me, without me, is done against me.’”

— Seynabou M., Sénégal

“If we worked more closely with people living in poverty, we could design projects that are more sustainable and more humane. As one Fourth World activist put it: ‘Pollution kills, but loneliness kills too.’”

— Collective contribution, France

“People living in poverty have direct and irreplaceable knowledge of poverty, its mechanisms, and its effects. Their lived experience enables the design of more just, realistic, and effective policies and actions.”

— Cyprien U., Rwanda

“We want to be the protagonists of our own stories.”

— Julissy A., New York, USA

“Human rights are not privileges. They are a promise of shared humanity, and a call to act together in dignity.”

— Goma, DRC

We call on governments, institutions, and everyone concerned to affirm that safe homes for all are human rights — and to act accordingly.

What is October 17?

Commemorated since 1987 as the World Day for Overcoming Extreme Poverty and recognised by the United Nations in 1992, the International Day for the Eradication of Poverty promotes dialogue and understanding between people living in poverty and their communities, and society at large. It represents an opportunity to acknowledge the efforts and struggles of people living in poverty, a chance for them to make their concerns heard, and a moment to recognise that poor people are in the forefront of the fight against poverty. (United Nations, Report of the Secretary-General, A/61/308, para. 58)

This concept paper, prepared by the International Committee for October 17, draws inspiration from the global consultation on the October 17 theme with people experiencing poverty and organisations working closely with them, conducted by the Forum for Overcoming Extreme Poverty. The views in this document do not necessarily represent those of the United Nations or its Member States.

More information about initiatives, events, and activities to mark October 17 around the world can be found at the [UNDESA](#) and [Forum for Overcoming Extreme Poverty](#) - International Committee October 17, 12 rue Pasteur, F-95480 Pierrelaye, France — international.committee@oct17.org

References

[Forum for Overcoming Poverty – 2026 Consultation](#) | [CESCR General Comment No. 4](#) | [OHCHR Fact Sheet No. 21](#) | [OHCHR — The Human Right to Adequate Housing](#) | [UN-Habitat](#) | [Institute of Global Homelessness](#) | [Doha Political Declaration \(2025\)](#) | [Vancouver Declaration on Human Settlements \(1976\)](#) | [Villarcoux Declaration of the International Committee for October 17 \(2026\)](#)