

Speaker: Claude Cahn

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CENTRE ON  
HOUSING RIGHTS  
AND EVICTIONS



**Centre on Housing Rights and Evictions**  
83 Rue de Montbrillant, Geneva, 1202,  
Switzerland  
Phone: (41-22) 734-1028;  
Fax: (41-22) 733-1126  
E-mail: [cohre@cohre.org](mailto:cohre@cohre.org)  
<http://cohre.org>

**Oral Statement: Philippines Universal Periodic Review**  
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The Centre on Housing Rights and Evictions (COHRE) welcomes the attention given to economic, social and cultural rights, and particularly to housing rights, in the National Report by the government of the Philippines. We note the efforts made by the government of the Philippines to provide tenure security to some urban poor communities, and programmes such as the community mortgage programme. We also note the particular efforts made by some local councils, notably in Naga City, to avoid forced evictions.

COHRE notes with approval that the legal framework in the Philippines provides a workable framework for the protection of the right to housing and the protection against forced eviction, notably through the Urban Development and Housing Act (or UDHA).

Given the emphasis rightly given to economic, social and cultural rights in the National Report, and the seriousness of the housing rights problems in the Philippines, COHRE is disappointed that so little attention was given to these issues in the interactive dialogue and working group report.

We would draw the Council's attention to some recent developments of real concern in the Philippines. First, the continuing prevalence of forced eviction, contrary to Philippines and international law. Over 57,000 people were evicted in Manila alone in 2007. The Metro Manila Development Authority in particular evicted over 2000 families last year, providing compensation or resettlement in less than 5% of cases. We note the

pending evictions as part of the Northrail-Southrail Linkage project, which in some cases are being carried out before relocation sites have been built.

We note the abolition earlier this year, via Executive Order no 708, of the Presidential Commission on the Urban Poor. This institution was mandated to ensure compliance by local government with Philippines law in cases of evictions from housing. The abolition of this institution removes a key check against abuse by the public authority in the Philippines.

We also note House Bill 1087 of 2008, currently before the parliament of the Philippines, which among other things would provide a new definition of professional squatting. The new draft definition would re-criminalise many urban poor communities. Squatting was decriminalised in the Philippines following a specific recommendation in the Concluding Observations of the UN Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights in 1995. This bill would roll back that reform. We join with Philippines NGOs in noting that this bill may breach the Social Justice provisions of the Constitution.

To conclude, COHRE urges that the Philippines government:

- stop the recent erosion to law and policy in the area of housing rights
- and in particular, that it not proceed with House Bill 1087 of 2008.

We further urge that authorities redouble their efforts to ensure housing rights for all in the Philippines.