

# AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL PRESS RELEASE

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## **African Housing ministers meeting in Kenya: Time to show commitment to addressing housing crisis in Africa**

Amnesty International, the Centre on Housing Rights and Evictions, the Kenya National Commission on Human Rights and Hakijamii Trust are calling on African housing ministers currently meeting in Nairobi, Kenya, to show commitment to addressing the housing crisis in Africa.

A coalition spokesperson said at a media conference in Nairobi today, "Africa is at a crossroads on the housing issue. Sub-Saharan Africa has the fastest rate of urbanisation in the world and governments cannot solve the problem with brutal forced evictions that violate human rights, as we have seen in Zimbabwe, Angola and recently in Kenya."

The African Ministerial Conference on Housing and Urban Development (AMCHUD) meets today and tomorrow in Nairobi to discuss strategies for realising the Millennium Development Goals relating to slums. However, civil society and experts have been excluded from the meeting, calling into question the commitment of African ministers to work with other stakeholders to ensure everyone can enjoy their internationally recognized right to adequate housing.

"The ministerial meeting in Nairobi provides a good opportunity for African states to pronounce themselves opposed to forced evictions, to develop human rights based strategies such as policies and laws to prevent forced evictions, instigate slum upgrading and provide serviced land for the poor and access to basic services, and to learn best practices from each other. But The ministers need to work with other stakeholders to achieve this," said a coalition spokesperson.

The coalition pointed to some good examples from Africa. For example, Kenya is adopting guidelines to prevent and remedy forced evictions, Botswana has developed certificates of occupancy to ensure secure tenure for residents of informal settlements, and South Africa has developed legislation that provides for a rights-based approach to evictions and has enabled victims to challenge forced evictions in the courts.

The coalition also said that across Africa, hundreds of thousands of people each year are forcibly evicted -- in many cases being left homeless, losing their possessions without compensation and/or being forcibly displaced far from sources of employment, livelihood or education -- in violation of regional and international human rights standards, including the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights and the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights. All 54 member states of the African Union are party to the African Charter while many African governments are states parties to the Covenant.

**Background**

In the last two years, violent forced evictions have displaced thousands in Angola and left hundreds of thousands destitute in Nigeria. In Zimbabwe, 700,000 persons were evicted in 2005 -- plunging the country deeper into humanitarian crisis -- and in Sudan, mass forced evictions, including of IDPs in and around Khartoum, are of continuing concern. In Kenya, residents continue to be violently evicted from forest areas and informal settlements without adequate resettlement.

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For further information, please see *A Joint Appeal to African Ministers on Urban Housing*, 3 April 2006, AI Index 32/002/2006

<http://web.amnesty.org/library/index/engaf320022006>

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