



The fifth World Urban Forum (WUF), under UN Habitat auspices, and the independent and parallel Urban Social Forum (USF), both concluded on 26 March in Rio de Janeiro. Reflecting a moral and substantive contribution of the host country, Brazil, the theme of WUF 5 was “The Right to the City,” to which UN Habitat added the subtheme “Bridging the Urban Divide.” This WUF featured the first-ever Urban Social Forum (USF), which took place in the Centro da Ação da Cidadania (CAC) with a parallel program organized by civil organizations, particularly Brazilian urban social movements.

The style, format and content of the discourse of the two forums differed considerably. However, both nominally served the same objective: to debate and exchange expertise toward implementing social justice and human rights in—and to—the city. The emergence of the USF is an indicator of the need for more critical civil expression around the biennial WUF. Despite its inclusive design, WUF maintains its statist and formal nature as organized through UN Habitat, an agency essentially dedicated to the service of states and governments. The USF is by, for and about civil society, and supposed to be a regular feature of the WUF from now on, and should convene next time, at WUF6 (2012).

HIC, as a Coalition structure, and individual HIC Members were responsible for organizing, sponsoring, producing and/or presenting content of 11 sessions within WUF5. HIC and HIC Members also were active in the debates at the USF, as well as in one session in WUF that was simulcast in the USF. Organizing events in the name of HIC and with other like-minded networks and civil organizations was managed through the coordination of the HIC General Secretariat, directed by General Secretary Ana Sugranyes.

HIC and HIC Member Activities @ WUF5 and USF	
HIC events with social movements and organizations in Rio at Urban Social Forum	
HIC joint ventures with other networks and organizations in official WUF activities	
HIC global annual meetings	

Day	Time	Activities	Venue	Organizers/remarks
21 March	–	HIC Board meeting	São Bento Monastery	By invitation only
22 March	10:00 – 12:00	Urban social movements March	From USF to WUF 5	Mobilization of social movements and organizations
	16:30 – 19:00	Urban Social Forum opening	CAC	USF
	21:00 – 23:30	Concert with <i>Apafunk</i>	CAC	USF
23 March	12:00 – 13:30	Book launch: <i>Cities for All: Proposals and Experiences towards the Right to the City</i>	W3-12	Edited and produced by HIC GS (EN, FR, SP)
	14:00 – 16:00	“Right to Adequate Housing: Tools for Successful Urbanization”	W3-20	Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR)
		“How People Face Evictions: Lessons from People-led Initiatives”	W2-2	Building and Social Housing Foundation (England), and Development Planning Unit, University College

				London
	16:30 – 19:00	Round Table: “The Right to the City with Social Justice, the Role of CSOs in Bridging the Urban Divide.” See UN-Habitat program	W3-11	COHRE, FNRU, HIC, IAI
24 March	09:00 – 12:00	Training event: “How to Implement The Right to the City”	W2-3	COHRE, FNRU, HIC, IAI, IBDU
	13:30 – 15:00 15:30 – 17:00 17:30 – 18:30	Dialogue 4: “Cultural Diversity in Cities” and “From Indifference to Tolerance”	W4-4	UN-HABITAT (ROLA)
	14:00 – 16:00	Latin American Consultation: “Actualizing the Right to the City”	W3-14	COHRE, FNRU, HIC, IAI
		Interactive Session on “Bridging the Urban Divide and the Challenge of Forced Evictions”		Nigerian Union of Tenants
		Charter-Agenda of human rights in the city		UCLG/Spidh
	16:30 – 18:30	“Housing, HIV/ AIDS: Sharing Knowledge, Making Connections”	W3-1	Rooftops Canada & HIC, bridging Africa and Latin America experiences
25 March	08:00 – 14:00	HIC General Assembly	São Bento Monastery	HIC Members and Friends
	14:00–16:00	“Historic City Centers: Spaces for Regeneration”	W2-4	Hebron Rehabilitation Committee; Center for Cultural Heritage Preservation; The Welfare Association; <i>Riwaq</i> : Center for Architectural Conservation (Palestine)
	16:30 – 19:00	Networking Event: “Urban Conflicts, Evictions and Mega Projects”	W3-3	COHRE, FNRU, HIC, IAI
	16:30 – 19:00	Networking Event: “Urban Conflicts, Evictions and Mega Projects” (simulcast from WUF)	CAC	COHRE, FNRU, HIC, IAI
25 March	19:00 – 22:00	Formulation of the final version of the USF statement to WUF 5	CAC	See declaration (in English)
22–26 March	–	The USF is your opportunity as HIC members to share experiences and proposals with other organizations	CAC	
22–26 March		Exhibit and meeting point	WUF Exhibition Hall, booth E80	HIC and USF

One of the innovative features of WUF5 was the formal “consultation” event with the host region’s civil society. That event, “Latin American Consultation: Actualizing the Right to the City,” took place on the first full day of sessions. The Latin American Consultation provided space to present the considerable experience of urban struggles across America’s southern half. The “consultation” with the host region’s civil society is expected to be a regular feature of future WUFs.

Urban Social Forum

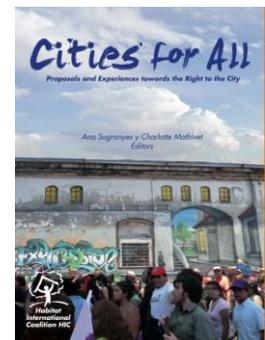
The Urban Social Forum program was diverse and hosted debates at various levels, from academic debates to calls to action from the street by local committees. Struggles from Angola to Indonesia were represented, and topics of debate included specific issues related to sectoral issues such as workers rights in the cities (organized by Rio De Janeiro State Industrial and Petroleum Workers Union), specific and technical subjects such as participatory budgeting in cities (Andalusian Fund of Municipalities for International Solidarity), and broad and global themes such as “climatic justice in the cities” (FASE, COEP and Amigos da Terra) and the criminalization of poverty and urban violence (Network of Communities and Movements against Violence).



HIC Latin America was particularly active in the USF. On Thursday, 25 March, the HIC-América Latina office (México) sponsored two events: a roundtable on the new HIC-AL/FIAN guide for documenting violations of the right to food, adequate housing, water and land in the context of monoculture and agribusiness (see the [Monocultures and Human Rights guide](#) and [Red Sugar, Green Deserts, compilation of Latin American experiences](#)); and a presentation of the video “The Charter of the City of Mexico: For the Right to the City.”

Both the USF and the first-ever “Civil Society Consultation” within WUF 5 emphasized Latin American issues. However, despite the dominant Latin American character of the USF and the customary practice that such “forums” are debating events not seeking common agreement or collective statements, the USF issued a collective Declaration of principles that is universal in content and character, as well as widely endorsed. [See [Declaration \(English version\)](#).]

Symbolic of a bridge crossing both the urban divide and formal and popular efforts at asserting the “right to the city” is the compilation of experiences in the HIC-GS produced publication: *Cities for All*. The printed and CD versions, launched at WUF5, are available in three languages (English, French and Spanish), and the English version is already available on line. (Click on the book image.)



Focus on MENA

In WUF, governments from the Middle East/North Africa, including Arab States and others, presented their technical achievements and plans in four formal sessions:

- Planning future Arab Cities: sustainability and opportunity, organized by Arab Towns Organization, Government of Kuwait and UN-HABITAT Kuwait;
- Best practices in Local Urban Observatories (LUOs): Arab Region, organized by Medina LUO, Saudi Arabia;
- Localizing the Habitat Agenda Indicators: Lessons learned: The Municipality of *al-Madinah al-Munawarah*, Saudi Arabia;

- Mega Cities in the Arab World: Challenges and Opportunities, the Case of Cairo, Egypt General Organization for Physical Planning (GOPP), Ministry of Housing, Utilities and Urban Development, Egypt.

The government-sponsored events and subjects deserve our attention. HIC Members attended the session on mega-cities, but conflicts with other events precluded participation in the other sessions. The mega-cities event was not only about Cairo, but also involved professional government planners from Yemen presenting their urban-development plans. The presentation of the grandiose Cairo 2050 plan elicited much attention and questions from the specialized audience, which focused on the plan's seeming absence of economic rationale for the depopulation, avenue aggrandizement and consideration of the plan's consequences on current inhabitants, as well as the plan's silence about the apparent externalization of its costs to the poor who will be required to dearly subsidize the plan's implementation. Insufficient time remained to address those questions.



The region-specific session that potentially related to the WUF central theme was the Municipality of *al-Madinah al-Munawarah*, since it invoked UN Habitat's supposed—but seldom evoked—normative framework: the Habitat II Agenda.

The regional news from the sidelines of WUF identified some interesting opportunities to advance housing and land rights tools and methods. For instance, UN Habitat soon will make available a training package on Islamic land principles. We also await the availability of the Arabic version of the book [Land, Law and Islam: Property and Human Rights in the Muslim World](#) on line, under the title: *الأرض والقانون والإسلام: حقوق الملكية وحقوق الإنسان في العالم الإسلامي*.

Consistent with the “Right to the City Theme,” WUF5 featured three events raised Jerusalem as a case in point, if only by the negation of indigenous residents’ “right to the city”:

On the afternoon of Tuesday, 23 March, the International Peace and Cooperation Center (Palestine) organized a panel entitled: “Right to the City: The Case of Jerusalem. This event reportedly included a lecture on Jerusalem as a binational city lacking all elements of right to the city. The ensuing debate was intended to show how the ongoing nonfulfillment of the right to the city (its human rights content) is intensifying conflict.

Taking a more-aesthetic approach, the Palestinian-organized session on “Historic City Centers: Spaces for Regeneration” potentially also raised the corresponding rights. The event organizers were Hebron Rehabilitation Committee, Center for Cultural Heritage Preservation, The Old City of Jerusalem Revitalization Program; The Welfare Association, and *Riwaq*: Center for Architectural Conservation. The event coincided with the HIC-FNRU mega-events, cities and Jerusalem session.



The *Riwaq* event presented a film and presentations from four organizations working on regeneration and cultural heritage protection in historic city centers in the West Bank: Jerusalem, Bethlehem, Hebron and Bir Zeit. It discussed planning and conservation works in historic centers as means for inclusive sustainable urbanization, good governance and participation, as well as access to shelter.

The Networking Event, “Urban Conflicts, Evictions and Mega Projects” was organized by HIC-Chile and Brazil’s Forum Nacional de Reforma Urbana (FNRU) inside WUF, and was simulcast on Thursday, 25 March, to WSF at the Centro da Ação da Cidadania. HIC Presentations of the Members from Palestine—Yacoub Odeh (Land Research Center) and Sharihan Hanoun (Civil Coalition for the Defense of Palestinian Rights in Jerusalem)—saw Yacoub presenting Israel’s plans and strategies under the Jerusalem 2020 Master Plan, and Sharihan testified as a victim of police-assisted settler eviction from her home in the Shaykh al-Jarrāh neighborhood.

That double presentation enabled the audience to see the wider demographic-manipulation objective carried out against indigenous Palestinian Jerusalemites through these forced evictions, confiscations and demolitions. That event and earlier interventions by Yacoub and Sharihan elicited much solidarity with Palestine from the social justice movement in the host country and region.

Palestine was a centerpiece in that event’s global coverage of past and coming mega-events, mega-plans and related urban conflict. In that context, the wider discussion engaged debate over private property v. social function of property, the assumptions that lie at the roots of urban development and urban bias, and the need to challenge certain ideological assumptions that lie at the base of claims of public purpose justifying evictions in the context of mega-events such as World Cup, Olympic Games and “world-class city” plans. In arguing that these events and plans often deepen the poverty of evicted and displaced people, the

panel and participants repeated the importance of documenting and quantifying the related damages, costs and losses, in order to prove the point.

Broadening the scope of participation, UN Habitat invited HLRN as speaker and moderator in its dialogues on “Cultural Diversity in Cities” to discuss “the cultural dimension in cities and to build an understanding about its impact on sustainable, equitable and inclusive urban development.” A full day of sessions was dedicated analyzing the “interface between cultural and physical/spatial dimensions helping the audience to develop knowledge about the role of cultural diversity in bridging the urban divide.” HLRN’s Global Program Officer, Angie Balata, presented on the issue of structures of domination within the context of conflict, occupation and war and their affects on the cultural harmony within cities. Her presentation focused on the separation walls that occupying powers have built across Palestine and Western Sahara. She also moderated the subsequent session entitled “From Indifference to Tolerance,” where participants more thoroughly addressed spatial segregation along cultural lines.

Among the events prior to the actual WUF and USF were specialized, sectoral meetings (i.e., related to gender, youth and habitat, etc.). At UN Habitat’s¹ pre-WUF “International Expert Group Meeting on Guidelines and Practices Related to Evictions, Acquisition/ Expropriation and Compensation,” HIC-HLRN coordinator Joseph Schechla presented the challenges of applying methodologies to capture damage/cost/loss, especially in the case of Israel’s Separation/ *Hafrada* Wall across Palestine’s West Bank and the UN Register of Damage (UNRoD). The following discussion focused on the values excluded from the present UNRoD method, and how to apply the (right to) reparations framework to quantify the consequences of a gross violation of housing and land rights with a remedial purpose.

Among the practical tools presented at WUF was the current UN Special Rapporteur (SR) on adequate housing Raquel Rolnik’s newest product. Since 2008, she has continued the work of previous SR Miloon Kothari—so organically linked to HIC and HLRN work—to find and proffer practical ways to uphold “[adequate housing as a component of the right to an adequate standard of living, and to nondiscrimination in that context](#).” At WUF5 on Tuesday, 23 March, SR Raquel Rolnik presented a simplified, six-UN-language-edition of the classic SR Miloon Kothari’s rights-based *Basic Principles and Guidelines on Development-based Evictions and Displacement* (2007) ([Arabic](#) and [English](#)). The simplified new publication [How to deal with projects that involve forced evictions and displacement?](#), and its’ even simpler version for urgent action in leaflet form ([They Want to Evict Us! What Now?](#), are available in Arabic: [كيف تتعامل مع مشروعات الإخلاء والترحيل](#) and [إنهم يريدون ترحيلنا. والأت؟](#)) and other information is available at: www.alhakfialmaskan.org.

Conclusions

While both the WUF and USF in Rio were laboratories and debating space conveying diverse experiences, it was also a marketplace for tools and methods to achieve objectives within—and outside—the “Right to the City” theme. Among the relevant tools for the MENA region are the Islamic land tools, historic preservation against loss, registering damage, loss and costs toward reparation of gross violations of their housing and land rights.

WUF5 was the occasion for UN Habitat to announce its [World Urban Campaign](#), the planning and design of which has involved some HIC Members. HIC’s official role in the campaign’s

¹ Organized by the Global Land Tools Network and the UN Housing Rights Programme, the meeting was coorganised with the Housing Secretariat of the Municipality of Rio de Janeiro and the Institute of Architects of Brazil.

implementation was not an item on the HIC Board or General Assembly agenda, but the subject still needs some debate. Since collaboratively developing the Habitat II Agenda (1996), HIC has been promoting the normative framework (Habitat II, human right to adequate housing, the “right to the city”) in its relations with UN Habitat. The relation between the World Urban Campaign and any normative framework is not explicit, and more internal HIC debate will likely follow.

The significant progress of this WUF included (1) the theme that focused much of the discourse on urban social justice and rights and (2) the active participation of civil society within, and parallel to the official Forum. These gains are supposed to be preserved and built into the next WUF. However, that continuity is in question with the announcement of the venue for the 2012 WUF6: Bahrain, His Royal Highness [Shaikh Khalifa bin Salman al-Khalifa](#) having extended the invitation. That choice portends immense [controversy](#), [challenges](#) and [opportunities](#) for the region’s civil society’s input into the next Forum. HIC-HLRN’s coordination office in Cairo will take up the related strategic and content issues in consultation with Middle East/North Africa Members and partners.

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We hope this report is helpful. Please tell us how we can improve it.

More-specific reports on the HIC Board meeting, HIC General Assembly and related meetings will follow.

If you need copies of documents, reports and publications mentioned here, or if you cannot find the on-line Arabic version of the Special Rapporteur’s practical guide or leaflet, you will find printed copies available at the HIC-HLRN Cairo coordination office:

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