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WORLDWIDE

PRESS RELEASE

Stop Akelius Worldwide tenants' coalition confirms serious disregard of human rights raised by UN Special Rapporteur, and calls for action

Berlin, London, Paris, Toronto, 29/06/2020

International Joint Statement by Akelius Tenants

Notice: Leilani Farha's tenure as UN Special Rapporteur for the Right to Housing ended on April 30, 2020. The Communications mentioned below were written and sent before April 30, during her tenure. Since May 1, 2020, Leilani Farha works with the organization „Make the Shift“. The new Special Rapporteur for the Right to Housing since May 1, 2020, is Balakrishnan Rajagopal.

The United Nations Special Rapporteur on the Right to Housing, Leilani Farha, has raised [serious human rights concerns regarding the business model and business practice of Akelius Residential](#), one of the world's largest housing corporations. Leilani Farha has sent an official UN Communication [to Akelius](#) and [to the governments of Canada, Germany and the UK](#), where Akelius operates.

We, as Akelius tenants, can fully confirm the Human Rights abuses reported in the UN Communication from our own experiences in Berlin, Hamburg, London, Paris and Toronto. Through this joint statement, we reaffirm the criticism of the Akelius business model and business practice, voiced by the UN.

Our apartments are our most important retreats, especially in a time of crisis. However, unfortunately, we share the common experience across all cities that Akelius systematically disregards our needs and our rights. Akelius treats their tenants solely as a source for generating maximum profit rather than as humans with a basic need for decent and affordable housing. In consequence, we are exposed to high stress through unnecessary but massive, long-term renovations, burdened with outrageous costs through aggressive rent maximization. We are forced out of our homes through renoviction and degraded living conditions, ignored complaints and delayed action to complaints, threatened and forced eviction, rent maximization, and the transformation of rental apartments into condominiums and luxury units.

When Akelius buys a new building, is when problems begin for tenants. Akelius enforces aggressive rent maximization exploiting legal loopholes, pushing apartments into the high price range. While minimizing costs through limited service and upkeep, Akelius undertakes unnecessary excessive renovations as soon as tenants leave. This subjects us to constant construction noise, water and heating outages, debris and dusty air, risking our health and our safety. In addition to the social impact, this wasting of resources has a considerable ecological impact on the environment. Once the transformation of a house into high-price apartments is finished, Akelius converts rented flats into condominiums.

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The sole purpose of Akelius business strategy is the maximization of private profits, no matter the costs to tenants and to cities. Akelius' business model is a major vehicle for violent gentrification and displacement of people. The fallout has to be paid by the cities where Akelius operates: Homelessness when people are forced out of their homes, high vacancy rates but less housing availability because apartments are stuck in renovation backlogs lasting months, the destruction of the social fabric of our communities when tenants are forced to move away from their neighborhood because prices have spiked. Additionally, the high rents forced on tenants drain money away from local businesses and companies into the accounts of obscure private foundations located in the Bahamas for tax avoidance [1].

We tenants keep our cities running. We live and work in our cities and pay taxes. We spend money in our community and support local economies. By developing relationships with our neighbors, we help make the social fabric which keeps our community together. Instead of Akelius' destructive business practices we need reasonable repairs and essential maintenance for our apartments. We need a housing policy preserving affordable housing, respecting tenants' rights and maintaining grown structures of our tenants' neighborhoods.

We firmly remind Akelius: Housing is not a commodity - housing is a Human Right. As a multinational company in housing, Akelius has a special responsibility of upholding the basic human right to housing. However, due to the disregard of the human rights issues raised by the UN Special Rapporteur, by tenants and by tenants' organizations, and due to our own experiences, we say that Akelius is not fit to take care of housing.

We are calling to those in power - to governments, to politicians, and to lawmakers - TO PUT A STOP TO THIS. We are calling to businesses, to companies, and to contractors, to stop providing goods and services to Akelius, and to investors, to reconsider Akelius, until they respect the Human Right to Housing. We are calling to each and every Akelius employee, to search their moral conscience, and to act ethically, lawfully, and humanely with tenants, prioritizing Housing as a Human Right, over profit. We are calling to the media, to journalists, and to investigators, to expose Akelius and their business practice. Finally, we are calling to our neighbors, to our communities, and to fellow tenants, to speak to your local government representative about Akelius. Let's stand together and stop Akelius with their business model of private profit maximization. Let's stand together and reclaim housing as a human right. Let's stand together and reclaim our cities for each and for all!

[1] For details on the Akelius web of [1] companies see a handout made by the Berlin Network of Akelius Tenants:

https://stoppakelius.de/wp-content/uploads/2020/01/Akelius_in_Berlin.english.pdf

Their dossier on Akelius: <https://stoppakelius.de/material/dossier>

The research by Akelius tenants in Toronto:

<https://akeliuscanadatorontotenants.blogspot.com/p/pictures.html>

The research by tenants' groups in Toronto: <https://www.landlordsoftoronto.com/akelius>



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We demand:

Stop unnecessary renovations, do essential and ecologically friendly repairs instead!

Stop aggressive rent maximization - especially in times of crisis!

Stop forcing tenants out of their homes!

Stop financial speculation with our basic need for affordable housing!

Stop Akelius - Expropriate!

Preserve affordable housing!

Respect the Human Right to Housing!

Socialize housing!

Stop Akelius Worldwide is an international coalition of Akelius Residential tenants, providing mutual support, advice and assistance between Akelius tenants in cities around the world. We also research, share and publicize information on Akelius and their business practice and operations. We use our experiences, knowledge and activism together as Akelius tenants, to stand up for our rights and campaign for housing reforms.

Signatures

Berlin Akelius Tenants Network

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