

UN expert on extreme poverty and human rights to visit the United States

Geneva (10 November 2017) – The United Nations Special Rapporteur on extreme poverty and human rights, Professor Philip Alston, will undertake a human rights fact-finding visit to the United States from 1 to 15 December 2017 to investigate government efforts to eradicate poverty in the country, and how this relates to the United States' obligations under international human rights law.

During his two-week visit, the Special Rapporteur will travel to Washington, D.C., California, Alabama, Georgia, Puerto Rico and West Virginia. Professor Alston will meet with government officials at the federal, state and local level. He will also meet with individuals living in poverty to hear about their experiences, talk to civil society organizations working on poverty and human rights, and receive briefings from academic experts.

“The United States is among the richest countries in the world, yet deep forms of poverty and inequality continue to exist in the country,” said the independent expert designated by the United Nations Human Rights Council in Geneva to monitor, report and advise on extreme poverty and its intersection with human rights.

“While some may wonder why an expert on extreme poverty and human rights visits a country as rich as the United States, the reality is that many individuals in the country are income-poor, or live in multidimensional poverty,” according to Professor Alston.

The visit by the Special Rapporteur is meant to provide him with additional information on the situation on poverty and human rights in the United States, but will be based on extensive input from civil society in advance of the mission. To date, the Special Rapporteur has received more than 40 written submissions from a multitude of civil society organizations (available here: goo.gl/c6u5rC) and has spoken to over 60 civil society organizations and individual academic experts.

“The United States has consistently emphasized the importance it attaches to civil and political human rights in its foreign policy and it has ratified the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights. One important focus of my visit will therefore be to examine how poverty affects the civil and political rights of the poor in the U.S.,” said the independent human rights expert.

Some of the topics that the Special Rapporteur will address during his visit are the protection of the human rights of the poor in relation to the criminal justice system, voting rights, political participation, and homelessness.

The expert will also consider the extent to which basic social rights are realized by those living in poverty in the U.S. “Social protection, health care, housing, water, and sanitation must all be part of the equation when considering the situation of the poor,” said Professor Alston.

The Special Rapporteur will also look at the impact on the poor of new technologies in the welfare and criminal justice systems.

The Special Rapporteur will share his preliminary observations and recommendations at a **press conference** to be held at the end of his mission on **15 December 2017 at 12pm at the United Nations Information Center in Washington, D.C.** He will also issue a press release and longer end of mission statement on December 15. The press conference will be live-streamed and there will be an opportunity to call into the press conference for journalists who are not based in Washington, D.C. The Special Rapporteur's final report on his visit to the United States will be available in the Spring of 2018 and will be presented to the Human Rights Council in Geneva in June 2018.

Follow the Special Rapporteur on **Twitter**: @Alston_UNSR

More information on the visit of the Special Rapporteur can be found on his website: <http://www.ohchr.org/EN/Issues/Poverty/Pages/SRExtremePovertyIndex.aspx>

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