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GUILTY OF HOMELESSNESS: EVALUATING THE CRIMINALIZATION OF HOMELESSNESS THROUGH A HUMAN RIGHTS FRAMEWORK

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ABSTRACT

Several international treaties and declarations affirm adequate housing as a fundamental human right. However, the United States, while a signatory to several of these agreements, does not recognize this right. Homelessness violates the right to housing. Moreover, homelessness often subjects individuals to additional rights violations. These additional violations often occur because governments criminalize homelessness.

Public order laws that criminalize basic life-sustaining behaviors, such as sitting, lying, and sleeping in public spaces, violate several constitutional rights when applied to unsheltered individuals experiencing homelessness. Devoid of any accommodation aside from the public streets, such individuals must necessarily perform the prohibited conduct in public, constantly risking arrest based solely on their status “crime” of experiencing homelessness.

This project uses primary and secondary domestic and international legal authority, including constitutional, statutory, and case law to analyze how the United States has systematically failed to recognize the right to housing, and specifically critiques statutory regimes that perpetuate and exacerbate homelessness by making it a crime. This project will then consider approaches that Scotland and France have taken that model the provisions of the right to housing described in the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights as possible exemplars for the United States. Preliminary research, including the applicability of these human rights-based international models suggests that the United States should adopt a human rights framework, including ratifying international instruments where appropriate, that recognizes and implements the human right to housing. Ultimately, the United States should respect and recognize the right to housing in order to appropriately and adequately combat the criminalization of homelessness.
GUILTY OF HOMELESSNESS: EVALUATING THE CRIMINALIZATION OF HOMELESSNESS THROUGH A HUMAN RIGHTS FRAMEWORK

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Franklin and his three-year-old son are experiencing homelessness in Sarasota, Florida. They sleep in a makeshift tent in a city park every night. Franklin spends his mornings applying for as many jobs as he can while a friend cares for his son. He has not found employment for over a year. In the afternoons, Franklin sweeps the floors of a local coffee shop in exchange for the ten dollars he needs to purchase training pants for his son. One night, a Sarasota police officer wakes Franklin and his son who are sleeping on sleeping bags in a city park. The officer tells Franklin that he has violated a city ordinance prohibiting outdoor lodging. The officer informs Franklin that if he agrees to go to a public shelter, the officer will not charge him for violating the ordinance—as long as he can provide the officer with proper identification. Because he has only made enough money to pay for his son’s child care expenses, Franklin has not been able to afford an identification card. Once the officer learns that Franklin does not have adequate identification, he rescinds the offer and charges him with violating the ordinance.

Governments systematically and discriminatorily enforce ordinances that criminalize basic life-sustaining behaviors such as sleeping, sitting, and lying against unsheltered individuals experiencing homelessness, like Franklin and his son. Such public order laws criminalize the status of experiencing homelessness, violating the Eighth Amendment’s Cruel

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1 This article will use the phrase “experiencing homelessness” instead of phrases such as “the homeless,” “homeless people,” or “homeless person,” in order to reaffirm the autonomy and personhood of individuals experiencing homelessness. This is because the term “homeless” is often used linguistically to marginalize individuals experiencing homelessness by connoting their un-domiciled status with derogatory second-class meanings. Though homelessness is considered a status for purposes of Eighth Amendment analysis, homelessness is not an inherent identity. See Nat’l Coalition for the Homeless, How You Can Help End Homelessness, http://nationalhomeless.org/want_to_help/index.html#a (last modified Nov. 4, 2013).
3 Id. at (d), (e).
4 Id. at (e).
7 Throughout this article, the terms “criminalization,” “anti-homeless laws,” and “public order laws” will be used interchangeably. All refer to the types of laws that comprise the criminalization paradigm.
and Unusual Punishment Clause.8 Criminalization also violates various international agreements to which the United States is either a party or a signatory.9 Anti-homeless laws criminalize status and discriminatorily apply to individuals experiencing homelessness, which violates Articles 710 and 2611 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights. Criminalization is furthermore proof of the United States’ failure to respect the right to housing which violates the United States’ obligations to the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights.12

Criminalization exists because the United States has failed to address homelessness adequately and effectively. Instead of focusing resources on ending homelessness, the United States has exacerbated homelessness by making it a crime. A human rights framework that recognizes the autonomy and personhood of all individuals can best address criminalization and shift governmental focus from emergency responses to permanent solutions. The United States can best establish this human rights framework by ratifying the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, which contains the right to housing in Article 11.13

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8 Jones v. City of Los Angeles, 444 F.3d 1118, 1136 (9th Cir. 2006), vacated on other grounds, 505 F.3d 1006 (9th Cir. 2007) (ruling that a Los Angeles city ordinance outlawing sitting, lying, or sleeping in public spaces violates the Cruel and Unusual Punishment Clause because it criminalizes homelessness).
13 ICESCR, supra note 9, at art. 11.
This article examines criminalization in the domestic and international human rights context and analyzes the implications of ratifying the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights. Part II of the article outlines the history of homelessness in the United States and the emergence of criminalization as a response. Part II also briefly explores the history of the applicable human rights framework and the development of the human right to housing. Part III explains how criminalization violates the Eighth Amendment, the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, and the United States’ obligations to the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights.

Part IV assesses ratifying the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights and enacting a right to housing as a solution. Part IV also explains why implementing a right to housing is the best solution to eradicating criminalization and beginning to eliminate homelessness, and delineates international and domestic measures that support housing rights. Part IV specifies what a right to housing entails and describes the component parts of the right. The article then outlines the housing rights schema in Scotland and France as successful exemplars for the United States. Part IV then explains how the right to housing and a human rights framework address the criminalization paradigm and describes additional benefits and advantages implicit in ratifying the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights and enacting a right to housing. Finally, Part V addresses the most prevalent objection to domestic housing rights and explains how the United States can overcome this objection.
II. History

A. Homelessness

1. Domestic

The federal government defines homelessness in several ways, evidencing the difficulty of narrowing homelessness into a single definition. Many federal programs use the definition provided in the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act, which includes those who “lack[] a fixed, regular, and adequate night time residence”, those living in facilities “not designed for or ordinarily used as a regular sleeping accommodation for human beings”, and those who have shelter but “will immediately lose their housing . . . .” Another federal definition of homelessness details the characteristics of children experiencing homelessness and includes those “who are sharing the housing of other persons due to loss of housing, economic hardship, or a similar reason.” This article focuses primarily on the plight of unsheltered individuals experiencing homelessness.

Modern homelessness emerged in the late 1970s. Previously, homelessness affected a only small faction of older, single, white males living in urban areas. The 1981-82 nation-wide recession and its residual effects, including especially the affordable housing crisis, greatly

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17 Id.
expanded the number and demographic of individuals experiencing homelessness on the public streets. 23

Initial domestic responses to the growing homelessness epidemic were primarily local. Community groups began responding with emergency aid in 1983. 24 Until the late 1980s, federal national disaster relief programs only provided limited support funds. 25 In 1987, however, Congress passed the first major federal response to homelessness, the Stewart B. McKinney Homeless Assistance Act. 26 The McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act distributed funds to shelters and transitional housing facilities and created a small permanent housing program. 27 This act also created the United States Interagency Council on Homelessness to analyze the nation’s response to homelessness and develop sustainable housing solutions. 28

2. International

In addition to these domestic responses, several treaties and international documents address homelessness and affordable housing. The International Bill of Human Rights contains the most notable of these documents. 29 The Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) was the first document drafted as part of the International Bill of Human Rights. 30 The United

26 This legislation is now known as the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act. Foscarinis, supra note 20, at 518.
27 Foscarinis, supra note 25, at 331.
Nations General Assembly adopted the UDHR in 1948.\textsuperscript{31} While not a treaty itself, the UDHR holds substantial legal weight and is considered part of customary international law.\textsuperscript{32} Article 25 of the UDHR states, “[e]veryone has the right to a standard of living adequate for the health and well-being of himself and his family, including food, clothing, housing and medical care.”\textsuperscript{33}

The two treaties that complete the International Bill of Human Rights codify many of the provisions contained in the UDHR. These are the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) and the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR). These treaties are legally binding on ratifying states.\textsuperscript{34} The ICESCR affirms the right to housing in Article 11. Article 11 of the ICESCR states, “[t]he States Parties to the present Covenant recognize the right of everyone to an adequate standard of living for himself and his family, including adequate food, clothing and housing, and to the continuous improvement of living conditions.”\textsuperscript{35} The United States signed the ICESCR in 1977, but never ratified the document.\textsuperscript{36} Other international documents affirm the human right to housing, but none feature the right so clearly and inclusively as the ICESCR.\textsuperscript{37} The Habitat Agenda,\textsuperscript{38} an international agreement signed by 171 countries including the United States, is the most recent document that addresses homelessness and affirms the right to housing.\textsuperscript{39}

\begin{footnotesize}
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\textsuperscript{32} Wiik, \textit{supra} note 30, at 917.
\textsuperscript{33} UDHR, \textit{supra} note 31, at 76.
\textsuperscript{34} Park, \textit{supra} note 29, at 1220.
\textsuperscript{35} ICESCR, \textit{supra} note 9, at art. 11.
\textsuperscript{36} NAT’L LAW CTR. ON HOMELESSNESS AND POVERTY, \textit{“SIMPLY UNACCEPTABLE:” HOMELESSNESS AND THE HUMAN RIGHT TO HOUSING IN THE UNITED STATES} 17 (2011). See infra notes 141-147 and accompanying text for a discussion on the United States’ reasons to refrain from ratifying the document.
\textsuperscript{37} MATTHEW CRAVEN, \textit{THE INTERNATIONAL COVENANT ON ECONOMIC, SOCIAL AND CULTURAL RIGHTS} 330 (Professor Ian Browlie ed., 1995).
\textsuperscript{39} Foscarinis, \textit{supra} note 25, at 345.
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B. Criminalization

Measures to punish individuals for experiencing homelessness date back to fourteenth century England. These laws prohibited vagrancy on the public streets. Similar penal responses to homelessness have existed in the United States since the colonial era, modeled after the English paradigm. For example, vagrancy prohibitions in America punished individuals exhibiting “homeless” characteristics. Under these laws, police could arrest individuals on the public streets for being unemployed when one was capable of obtaining employment. Throughout the 1970s and 1980s however, several lawsuits successfully challenged and struck down vagrancy laws. Courts in these cases held that vagrancy laws “encourage[d] arbitrary and erratic arrests and convictions.”

After the Supreme Court ruled vagrancy laws unconstitutional, communities were left without a legal means to systematically remove individuals experiencing homelessness from public sight. Cities then turned to alternative methods. Throughout the 1980s-1990s, communities developed practices that included large-scale arrest sweeps, property sweeps, and arrest campaigns. These practices formed the basis of what is now known as criminalization. “Criminalization” as it is broadly used today includes prohibitions against basic life-sustaining

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41 Id. at 302.
43 Smith, supra note 40, at 302.
45 Jarvis, supra note 23, at 419.
behaviors including sleeping, camping, sitting, lying, loafing, and obstruction of public thoroughfares.

III. The Criminalization Paradigm Violates Domestic and International Rights

Homelessness is a prima facie violation of the human right to housing. Homelessness can furthermore exacerbate one’s susceptibility to additional rights violations. The United States has reacted to homelessness by enacting public order laws that make homelessness a crime. Such laws account for these additional violations in their enactment and application. Anti-homeless laws violate the domestic and international rights of individuals experiencing homelessness in several ways. First, they violate the Eighth Amendment to the Constitution

47 E.g., ATLANTIC CITY, N.J., MUN. CODE § 204-29 (2014), http://www.ecode360.com/AT0848: “No person shall sleep in the street, parks or any other public place within the City of Atlantic City.”
48 E.g., PORTLAND, OR., MUN. CODE § 14A.50.020 (2014), http://www.portlandonline.com/auditor/index.cfm?c=28148: “It is unlawful for any person to camp in or upon any public property or public right of way . . . .”
49 See e.g., SEATTLE, WASH., MUN. CODE § 15.48.040 (A) (2013), http://library.municode.com/index.aspx?clientId=13857: “A person shall not sit or lie down upon a public sidewalk, or upon a blanket, chair, stool, or any other object placed upon a public sidewalk, during the hours between 7 a.m. and 9 p.m. . . . .”
50 E.g., AUSTIN, TEX., MUN. CODE § 9-4-14 (E) (2013), http://www.amlegal.com/austin_tx/: “A person commits an offense if . . . the person is asleep outdoors; or . . . the person sits or lies down in the right-of-way between the roadway and the abutting property line or structure, or on an object placed in that area.”
51 E.g., BOISE, IDAHO, MUN. CODE § 9-10-05 (2012), http://cityclerk.cityofboise.org/city-code/: “It shall be unlawful for any person to loaf or loiter in or about the streets, alleys or public places in the City.”
52 E.g., LAS VEGAS, NEV., MUN. CODE § 10.47.020 (2013), http://library.municode.com/index.aspx?clientId=14787: “It is unlawful to intentionally obstruct pedestrian or vehicular traffic in an area open and available for pedestrian or vehicular traffic.”
55 See Human Rights Indicators, supra note 54, at 164.
56 The legal “status” of individuals experiencing homelessness is affected (violated) “through the application of existing criminal laws against the homeless, through the creation of new laws to target the homeless, through laws that seem to criminalize homelessness itself, and through depictions of the homeless that highlight their legally relevant differences from other citizens.” The criminalization paradigm legally separates housed individuals from individuals experiencing homelessness by giving individuals experiencing homelessness “a different bundle of civic relations from full citizens.” Judith Lynn Failer, Homelessness in the Criminal Law, in FROM SOCIAL JUSTICE TO CRIMINAL JUSTICE: POVERTY AND THE ADMINISTRATION OF CRIMINAL LAW 248, 251 (William C. Heffernan & John Kleinig eds., 2000).
because they unlawfully criminalize a status. Second, anti-homeless laws violate the ICCPR because they punish individuals experiencing homelessness and unreasonably discriminate against them. Third, anti-homeless laws manifest the United States’ refusal to respect the human right to housing. This violates the United States’ obligations regarding the ICESCR.

A. Constitutional Violations: The Eighth Amendment

Anti-homeless laws violate the Cruel and Unusual Punishment Clause of the Eighth Amendment because they criminalize the status of experiencing homelessness. When there are no other alternatives beyond the public streets, unsheltered individuals experiencing homelessness must necessarily perform the prohibited but inherently innocent conduct in public. Laws that criminalize conduct that is inseparable from the status of experiencing homelessness thereby criminalize that status. This constitutes cruel and unusual punishment which violates the Eighth Amendment.

The Eighth Amendment and its status analysis apply to criminalization through what is known as the Robinson Doctrine. In 1962 in Robinson v. California, the Supreme Court held a state statute unconstitutional because it criminalized the “status” of narcotic addiction. In holding this, the Court reasoned that laws that criminalize a person’s status amount to cruel and unusual punishment.

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58 Jones v. City of Los Angeles, 444 F.3d 1118, 1136 (9th Cir. 2006), vacated on other grounds, 505 F.3d 1006 (9th Cir. 2007).
59 NAT’L LAW CTR. ON HOMELESSNESS AND POVERTY, supra note 10, at 6.
61 Extreme Poverty and Human Rights, supra note 11, at ¶ 75.
62 Jones, 444 F.3d at 1136.
63 Id.
64 Smith, supra note 40, at 294.
66 Id.
Several courts have analyzed whether this doctrine applies to conduct that is inextricably linked to a status.\textsuperscript{67} In 1968, the Supreme Court upheld a city ordinance because it prohibited the specific act of drinking in public rather than a more general status.\textsuperscript{68} However, Justice White discussed in his concurring opinion the implications of the decision if applied to individuals experiencing homelessness. He wrote,

[t]he fact remains that some chronic alcoholics must drink and hence must drink somewhere. Although many chronic alcoholics have homes, many others do not. For all practical purposes the public streets may be home for these unfortunates, not because their disease compels them to be there, but because, drunk or sober, they have no place else to go and no place else to be when they are drinking. This is more a function of economic station than of disease, although the disease may lead to destitution and perpetuate that condition. For some of these alcoholics I would think a showing could be made that resisting drunkenness is impossible and that avoiding public places when intoxicated is also impossible. As applied to them this statute is in effect a law which bans a single act for which they may not be convicted under the Eighth Amendment—the act of getting drunk.\textsuperscript{69}

Justice White’s argument highlights some important points about status analysis in the context of homelessness. Unsheltered individuals experiencing homelessness lack private accommodation and must necessarily always sit, sleep, and lie in public spaces.\textsuperscript{70} Therefore, if a law prohibits sitting, sleeping, and lying in public spaces, an unsheltered individual experiencing homelessness will necessarily always violate this law. Public order laws thereby criminalize the status of experiencing homelessness because the only place available for such individuals to perform the conduct is in the very environment the conduct is prohibited.\textsuperscript{71}

\textsuperscript{67} Several courts have disagreed in deciding whether conduct equals status, especially under the circumstances of individuals experiencing homelessness. This is largely because the U.S. Supreme Court has remained moot on the issue. Tobe v. City of Santa Ana, 892 P.2d 1145, 1166 (Cal. 1995). See also Simon, supra note 46, at 660.

\textsuperscript{68} Powell v. Texas, 392 U.S. 514, 532 (1968).

\textsuperscript{69} Id. at 551 (1968) (White, J., concurring).


\textsuperscript{71} See Pottinger, 810 F. Supp. at 1564, 1583. By making it illegal for individuals experiencing homelessness to sleep in the one area of the city they physically can, a city thereby makes it illegal for individuals experiencing homelessness to sleep at all; “a ban against activities in public places ‘amounts in effect to a comprehensive ban’ on those activities.” Failer, supra note 56, at 255 (quoting Jeremy Waldron, Homelessness and the Issue of Freedom, 39 UCLA L. REV. 295, 318 (1991-1992)).
other options available, criminalizing conduct necessary for a human being to perform, and categorically necessary for an individual experiencing homelessness to perform in public, is cruel and unusual.\textsuperscript{72}

Distinguishing between individuals experiencing homelessness involuntarily and individuals, though few, experiencing homelessness voluntarily is also relevant for Constitutional analysis. Eighth Amendment protection applies to unsheltered individuals experiencing homelessness because their circumstances fulfill the status “three-part test.”\textsuperscript{73} First, the individual must be experiencing homelessness involuntarily.\textsuperscript{74} Second, the individual must not have any nonpublic spaces available to him or her in which to perform the prohibited activities.\textsuperscript{75} Third, the prohibited activities must have been punished involuntarily.\textsuperscript{76} If the composite answer to the three-part test is yes, then the public order law in question likely violates the Eighth Amendment.\textsuperscript{77}

**B. Treaty Violations**

1. **ICCPR**

Article 7 of the ICCPR prohibits State parties from subjecting individuals to “torture or to cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment.”\textsuperscript{78} In the same way criminalization violates the Eighth Amendment, criminalization also violates Article 7 of the ICCPR. Though cities may appeal to legitimate governmental aims by criminalizing behavior necessary for unsheltered individuals experiencing homelessness to perform in public,\textsuperscript{79} these aims do not

\textsuperscript{72} Pottinger, 810 F. Supp. at 1564.

\textsuperscript{73} See Foscarinis, supra note 24, at 43.

\textsuperscript{74} Id.

\textsuperscript{75} Id.

\textsuperscript{76} Id.

\textsuperscript{77} Id.

\textsuperscript{78} ICCPR, supra note 9, at art. 7.

justify the severity of the laws enforced.\textsuperscript{80} Anti-homeless laws do not prohibit inherently criminal conduct,\textsuperscript{81} but rather criminalize inherently innocent and involuntary conduct that is inextricably linked to the status of experiencing homelessness. This amounts to cruel, inhuman, and degrading treatment,\textsuperscript{82} violating Article 7 of the ICCPR.\textsuperscript{83}

Criminalization is not only a “disproportionately punitive measure,” it is also a prejudicial and discriminatory practice.\textsuperscript{84} Though public order laws may omit language that explicitly targets individuals experiencing homelessness, governments apply and enforce them against individuals experiencing homelessness in a discriminatory manner.\textsuperscript{85} The United States federal government has even conceded this fact.\textsuperscript{86}

Article 26 of the ICCPR guarantees to all persons equal protection of the laws without any discrimination.\textsuperscript{87} The United Nations Human Rights Committee interprets the term “discrimination” as it is used in the ICCPR to mean

any distinction, exclusion, restriction, or preference which is based on any ground such as . . . property, . . . or other status, and which has the purpose or effect of nullifying or impairing the recognition, enjoyment or exercise by all persons, on an equal footing, of all rights and freedoms.\textsuperscript{88}

The United Nations Secretary General has explained that economic and social status accurately falls under the “other” category of prohibited grounds for discrimination.\textsuperscript{89} Accordingly, laws

\textsuperscript{80} Extreme Poverty and Human Rights, supra note 11, at ¶ 35.
\textsuperscript{82} Extreme Poverty and Human Rights, supra note 11, at ¶ 36.
\textsuperscript{83} NAT’L LAW CTR. ON HOMELESSNESS AND POVERTY, supra note 10, at 6.
\textsuperscript{84} Extreme Poverty and Human Rights, supra note 11, at ¶ 31.
\textsuperscript{85} Id. at ¶ 34. See also Failer, supra note 56, at 253.
\textsuperscript{87} ICCPR, supra note 9, at art. 26.
that discriminatorily apply to individuals based on their housing status are examples of prohibited discriminatory policy that violate Article 26 of the ICCPR.\(^90\)

2. ICESCR

Article 11 of the ICESCR affirms the human right to housing: “[t]he States Parties to the present Covenant recognize the right of everyone to an adequate standard of living for himself and his family, including adequate food, clothing and housing, and to the continuous improvement of living conditions.”\(^91\) The United States signed the ICESCR in 1977, but has never ratified the document.\(^92\) Absent ratification, the United States is not bound to adhere to the treaty’s text.

However, the United States does have several obligations regarding the ICESCR. As a signatory, the United States is required under accepted standard international law to “refrain from acts which would defeat the object and purpose of a treaty.”\(^93\) Moreover, the body of human rights is indivisible and interdependent.\(^94\) This means that a State party is equally accountable for violating an individual’s economic, social, or cultural right as it is for violating an individual’s civil or political right.\(^95\) This is true regardless of whether the State party has ratified the appropriate Covenant.\(^96\)

According to the Economic and Social Council, a State can violate an individual’s economic and social rights through acts of commission.\(^97\) Acts of commission include “deliberately retrogressive” measures that “reduce[] the extent to which any . . . right is

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\(^90\) Extreme Poverty and Human Rights, supra note 11, at ¶ 18.
\(^91\) ICESCR, supra note 9, at art. 11.
\(^92\) ICESCR, supra note 9.
\(^95\) Id.
\(^96\) Id.
\(^97\) Id. at ¶¶ 14, 15.
guaranteed.” Anti-homeless laws are acts of commission because they are degenerative measures, characteristic of the vagabond era, that violate the U.S. Constitution and the ICCPR. Criminalizing behavior necessary for unsheltered individuals experiencing homelessness to perform in public seriously hinders their ability to equitably enjoy the protection of domestic and international law.99

A State party can also violate an individual’s economic and social rights through acts of omission. Acts of omission include failing to “reform or repeal legislation . . . manifestly inconsistent with an obligation to the [ICESCR]” and failing to “remove promptly obstacles” that hinder “the immediate fulfillment of a right guaranteed by the [ICESCR].”100 The criminalization paradigm is also an act of omission because it perpetuates, rather than removes, anti-homeless laws. The criminalization paradigm systematically deprives individuals experiencing homelessness of their economic and social rights under the ICESCR.101 Moreover, criminalization misappropriates governmental funds to pursue anti-homeless policies, which significantly reduces the availability and feasibility of maintaining effective social services. This further diminishes the potential for individuals experiencing homelessness to exercise and enjoy their economic, social and cultural rights.102 The criminalization paradigm therefore directly opposes any attempt to respect the right to housing and precludes the United States from fulfilling its duties as a signatory to the ICESCR.103

The criminalization paradigm violates both the civil and political rights and the economic, social, and cultural rights of individuals experiencing homelessness, in both the

98 Id. at ¶ 14 (e).
99 See id. at ¶¶ 11, 20.
100 Id. at ¶ 15 (b), (g).
101 Id. at ¶ 21. See also CRAVEN, supra note 37, at 110.
102 Extreme Poverty and Human Rights, supra note 11, at ¶ 23.
103 Id. at ¶ 75.
domestic and international legal contexts. Criminalization violates the Eighth Amendment because it is cruel and unusual punishment.\textsuperscript{104} This cruel, degrading, and inhuman treatment also violates the ICCPR.\textsuperscript{105} Criminalization also violates the ICCPR because it is a burdensome and discriminatory practice.\textsuperscript{106} Finally, criminalization systematically violates the economic and social rights of individuals experiencing homelessness.\textsuperscript{107} This prevents the United States from effectively eliminating homelessness and fulfilling its obligations as a signatory to the ICESCR.\textsuperscript{108}

IV. The United States Should Ratify the ICESCR and Enact a Right to Housing

Criminalization is not an effective or appropriate response to homelessness.\textsuperscript{109} Anti-homeless laws exacerbate homelessness because they preclude communities from addressing and reducing the factors and causes that perpetuate it.\textsuperscript{110} Current conflicting policies prevent the United States from making any substantial progress towards effectively eliminating homelessness. Though the growing judicial consensus agrees that criminalization is ineffective and counter-productive, several courts still oppose this notion.\textsuperscript{111} A human rights framework will allow the United States to most effectively address and eliminate homelessness and thereby eradicate criminalization.

Securing permanent housing can most effectively eliminate homelessness.\textsuperscript{112} Moreover, the body of indivisible and interdependent human rights is a powerful framework in which to

\textsuperscript{105} NAT’L LAW CTR. ON HOMELESSNESS AND POVERTY, supra note 10, at 6.
\textsuperscript{106} Extreme Poverty and Human Rights, supra note 11, at ¶ 31.
\textsuperscript{107} ICESCR Substantive Issues: The Maastricht Guidelines, supra note 12, at ¶ 21. See also CRAVEN, supra note 37, at 110.
\textsuperscript{108} Extreme Poverty and Human Rights, supra note 11, at ¶ 75.
\textsuperscript{109} U.S. INTERAGENCY COUNCIL ON HOMELESSNESS, SEARCHING OUT SOLUTIONS: CONSTRUCTIVE ALTERNATIVES TO THE CRIMINALIZATION OF HOMELESSNESS 7 (2012).
\textsuperscript{110} Id.
\textsuperscript{111} Foscarinis, supra note 24, at 2.
\textsuperscript{112} See U.S. INTERAGENCY COUNCIL ON HOMELESSNESS, supra note 109, at 11-12.
challenge criminalization and develop the housing first scheme.\textsuperscript{113} The ICESCR offers a structured approach to enacting a right to housing. The United States should therefore ratify the ICESCR. Enacting a right to housing will most effectively address and curtail the underlying causes and effects of poverty and homelessness.\textsuperscript{114}

A. The United States is Ready for a Right to Housing

Various international and domestic notions confirm the United States’ capacity to enact a right to housing. First, U.S. representatives were integral in drafting the International Bill of Human Rights.\textsuperscript{115} This involvement indicates the United States’ commitment to human rights norms. The United States’ voluntary involvement in additional human rights instruments reinforces this commitment.\textsuperscript{116} Second, the United States’ reasons to initially refrain from ratifying the ICESCR are now obsolete, and few to no current legitimate reasons justify the United States’ continued abstention.\textsuperscript{117} Third, the federal government and numerous state governments have enacted measures that address criminalization, homelessness, and even housing, and attempt to rectify the current state of homelessness in the United States.\textsuperscript{118} Taken together, this composite suggests that the United States is ready for a right to housing.

The United States’ significant involvement in the creation of the United Nations and the International Bill of Human Rights drafting process illustrates its commitment to human rights norms.

\textsuperscript{113} The idea behind the housing first scheme is to provide individuals experiencing homelessness with housing first. Case managers and social service providers then work to provide these individuals with necessary social assistance after the individuals secure permanent housing. The housing first scheme prioritizes the need for housing and acknowledges that many individuals need additional social services in order to sustain the housing and maintain their personal health and well-being. NATIONAL ALLIANCE TO END HOMELESSNESS, WHAT IS HOUSING FIRST? (2006), available at http://b.3cdn.net/naeh/b974efab62f6eb2b36c_pzm6b4ct.pdf. See also United States Interagency Council on Homelessness, Housing First, UNITED STATES INTERAGENCY COUNCIL ON HOMELESSNESS, http://usich.gov/usich_resources/solutions/explore/housing_first/ (last visited April 11, 2014).

\textsuperscript{114} See Kristen David Adams, Do We Need a Right to Housing?, 9 NEV. L.J. 275, 316 (2009).


\textsuperscript{116} See infra notes 131-40 and accompanying text.

\textsuperscript{117} See infra notes 141-47 and accompanying text.

\textsuperscript{118} See infra notes 148-59 and accompanying text.
principles. President Franklin D. Roosevelt and British Prime Minister Winston Churchill were largely responsible for initiating the creation of the United Nations.\textsuperscript{119} In August 1941, President Roosevelt and Prime Minister Churchill issued an “affirmation . . . ‘of certain common principles in the national policies of their respective countries on which they based their hopes for a better future for the world.’”\textsuperscript{120} These cooperative measures set the stage for later human rights development.\textsuperscript{121}

U.S. involvement was again impactful during the drafting process of the International Bill of Human Rights, beginning with President Franklin D. Roosevelt’s 1941 State of the Union Address.\textsuperscript{122} Roosevelt’s “Four Freedoms” speech marked a pivotal moment in human rights history. The speech highlighted the importance of economic concerns and established them on the world agenda.\textsuperscript{123} The freedom from want, the third freedom enumerated in the speech, equates to economic security and an economically peaceful life for a nation’s population.\textsuperscript{124} It was thus an American president that first set the “moral and philosophical tone which would support the demand for an international bill of human rights.”\textsuperscript{125}

The United Nations Economic and Social Council established a Commission on Human Rights in 1946 that drafted the International Bill of Human Rights. Eleanor Roosevelt headed this committee.\textsuperscript{126} Eleanor Roosevelt’s advocacy efforts in this role were vital to the International

\textsuperscript{119} Wiik, supra note 30, at 912.
\textsuperscript{121} SVEN BERNHARD GAREIS & JOHANNES VARWICK, THE UNITED NATIONS: AN INTRODUCTION 140 (Lindsay P. Cohn trans., 2005).
\textsuperscript{123} See id. at xxviii.
\textsuperscript{124} Id.
\textsuperscript{125} Id.
\textsuperscript{126} Id. at xxiv.
Bill of Human Rights and the UDHR. U.S. representatives contributed significantly to drafting the UDHR, which contained provisions embracing both civil and political rights and economic, social, and cultural rights. Though the UDHR is not a treaty and is therefore not binding on its signatories, scholars and commentators have indicated its authority as customary international law. Several domestic courts have acknowledged the UDHR’s legal status, further indicating the United States’ acceptance of human rights principles.

Several other notable and ratified international agreements affirm the right to housing and further demonstrate the United States’ pledge to observe human rights norms. The Charter of the Organization of American States, ratified in 1951, asserts “adequate housing for all sectors of the population” as an achievable goal. The International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination, ratified in 1994, affirms the human right to housing. Finally, the interdependency of rights between the ICESCR and the ICCPR demonstrates the United States’ implicit support of economic and social rights through its commitment to civil and political rights. The United States has also signed but not ratified several other international treaties that affirm the right to housing, including the Convention on the Elimination of All

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127 Keller, supra note 115, at 561.
128 Id.
130 See e.g., Filartiga v. Pena-Irala, 630 F.2d 876, 883 (2d Cir. 1980).
Forms of Discrimination Against Women,\textsuperscript{134} the Convention on the Rights of the Child,\textsuperscript{135} and the Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees.\textsuperscript{136}

The United States’ involvement in the Habitat Agenda perhaps best demonstrates its commitment to human rights and the right to housing specifically. The Habitat Agenda explicitly proclaims the right to housing’s importance. The United States is not only a signatory to the Habitat Agenda, but U.S. representatives also contributed significantly to drafting the document.\textsuperscript{137} The parties to the Habitat Agenda agreed to ensure “the full realization of the human rights set out in international instruments and in particular, in this context, the right to adequate housing . . . .”\textsuperscript{138} The document even reiterates this goal: “[w]e reaffirm our commitment to the full and progressive realization of the right to adequate housing, as provided for in international instruments.”\textsuperscript{139} The Habitat Agenda is not a treaty, but the United States’ voluntary signature to the agreement illustrates its independent commitment to the rights enumerated within.\textsuperscript{140}

Though the United States may have had legitimate reasons to initially refrain from ratifying the ICESCR, those reasons no longer justify its continued refusal to ratify the treaty. The United States did not initially ratify the ICESCR primarily because the federal government was concerned that the treaty would infringe upon the sovereignty of the State.\textsuperscript{141} However, government officials expressed this caution in the Cold War era context; they feared these human

\textsuperscript{136} Convention Relating to the status of Refugees art. 21, July 28, 1951, 189 U.N.T.S. 150.
\textsuperscript{137} \textsc{nat’l law ctr. on homelessness and poverty}, supra note 36, at 20.
\textsuperscript{138} The Habitat Agenda, supra note 38, at ¶ 26.
\textsuperscript{139} Id. at ¶ 39.
\textsuperscript{140} See \textsc{nat’l law ctr. on homelessness and poverty}, supra note 133, at 13. See also id. at ¶ 25.
rights embodied a communist plan that threatened the way of American life. Now many years after aggressions against the Soviet Union have subsided, these reasons for rejecting ratification have lost much of their force.

Despite a brief period of support, subsequent presidential administrations declined to ratify the treaty for political reasons. These administrations expressed their reluctance to bind the United States to laws concerning mere “desirable social goals.” Though housing and the elimination of homelessness may be desirable goals, they become a matter of national policy when the State instead employs criminal sanctions to respond to homelessness. Absent these feeble reasons, the United States lacks sufficient rationale to justify its continued refusal to ratify the ICESCR.

The United States has also enacted various domestic policies that support the right to housing. President Roosevelt’s 1944 State of the Union Address articulated a Second Bill of Rights, under which would fall “[t]he right of every family to a decent home . . . .” The Preamble of the 1949 Housing Act incorporated a similar goal into federal law. Later social welfare measures also support economic, social, and cultural rights, including “the earned

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143 First, economic human rights are no longer considered innately communist or Soviet. Second, economic rights are becoming increasingly relevant in order to address the national poverty (and homelessness) epidemic. Third, the sphere of international law is changing and evolving. The United States is becoming increasingly involved in international cooperative measures and is increasingly concerned with its international image. Stark, supra note 141, at 82-86.
144 During his term, President Jimmy Carter advanced several policies that bolstered domestic support of international human rights, including “upgrad[ing] the head of the State Department’s human rights division to an Assistant Secretary of State” and “sign[ing] the International Covenants and sen[ding] them to the Senate urging ratification.” Meyer, supra note 122, at xlv. The Clinton administration also indicated support of the ICESCR. See Barbara Stark, U.S. Ratification of the Other Half of the International Bill of Rights, in The United States and Human Rights 75, 75 (David P. Forsythe ed., 2000).
145 Shiman, supra note 129.
146 Id.
147 See Stark, supra note 144, at 78-79.
income tax credit, food stamps, Medicaid, Medicare, school breakfasts and lunches, Social
Security, and supplementary security income.”

In addition to the various federal measures, many states have enacted social support
provisions compatible with the right to housing. For example, several state constitutions include
social welfare provisions. Though some of these only implicitly support social welfare
programs, many explicitly commit the state to supporting economic and social needs. One state has even guaranteed shelter for every male experiencing homelessness who applies for it.\footnote{152}{\textit{No. 42582/79} (N.Y. Sup. Ct. Aug. 26, 1981) (final judgment by consent), \textit{available at} \url{http://www.coalitionforthehomeless.org/FileLib/PDFs/callahanconsentdecree.pdf}.} The 1978 \textit{Callahan v. Carey} case established a right to shelter for males experiencing homelessness in New York via a consent decree.\footnote{153}{\textit{Id.}} The parties in \textit{Callahan} agreed that “[t]he City defendants shall provide shelter and board to each homeless man who applies for it”, provided the applicant qualifies for the home relief program in New York.\footnote{154}{\textit{Id.}} This right was later extended to include females\footnote{155}{\textit{Edredge v. Koch}, 469 N.Y.S.2d 744 (N.Y. App. Div. 1983).} and families\footnote{156}{\textit{McCain v. Koch}, 511 N.E.2d 62 (N.Y. 1987).} experiencing homelessness. Though the right to shelter for individuals experiencing homelessness in New York is minimal and realistically unenforced,\footnote{157}{\textit{Thomas Byrne \\& Dennis P. Culhane}, \textit{The Right to Housing: An Effective Means for Addressing Homelessness?}, \textit{14 U. PA. J. LAW \\& SOC. CHANGE} 379, 386 (2011).} it indicates that a right to housing is both possible and justified. The most recent state policies enacted likely come the closest to explicitly addressing and challenging criminalization. Since 2012, three states have enacted statutes promulgating Homeless Bills of Rights. All three Homeless Bills of Rights are similar, guaranteeing the right of individuals experiencing homelessness to use and move freely in public spaces.\footnote{158}{\textit{CONN. GEN. STAT. ANN.} § 1-500 (West 2013); \textit{775 ILL. COMP. STAT. ANN.} 45/10 (West 2013); \textit{R.I. GEN. LAWS} § 34-37.1-3 (2012).} All three Homeless Bills of Rights prohibit anyone from denying any other individual’s rights solely on the basis of his or her housing.\footnote{159}{\textit{§} 1-500; \textit{45/10}; \textit{§} 34-37.1-3.} These Homeless Bills of Rights exemplify states’ commitments to addressing disparate treatment based on housing status and challenging laws that disproportionately and discriminatorily affect individuals experiencing homelessness.
A right to housing is not an illogical next step. The United States’ history of human rights involvement, the weakness of the United States’ previous rationale to abstain from ratifying the ICESCR, and the numerous social welfare policies enacted by various federal and state governments all illustrate the United States’ implicit support for ending homelessness through a human rights framework. The United States is ready for a right to housing, and United Nations implementation guidelines will make for a smoother transition to this human rights framework.

B. Components of the Right to Housing

In order to address the gap between the goals set out in Article 11 of the ICESCR and the realities in many parts of the world, the United Nations published General Comment 4 on the right to adequate housing. In the document, the Committee for Economic, Social and Cultural Rights explains that the right to “adequate housing” should not be “interpreted in a narrow or restrictive sense which equates it with, for example, the shelter provided by merely having a roof over one’s head” but “should be seen as the right to live somewhere in security, peace and dignity.”

Accordingly, the right to housing includes seven core components:

1) **Legal security of tenure.** A right to housing includes legal protection against forced eviction, harassment, and other threats.

2) **Availability of services, materials, facilities, and infrastructure.** A right to housing includes a proper stock of materials necessary for essential “health, security, comfort, and

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161 Id. at ¶ 8 (a).
nutrition.”162 Specifically, all individuals should have access to safe drinking water and the necessary materials for cooking and washing.163

3) Affordability. A right to housing means that individuals should not sacrifice other basic needs in order to procure funds to pay for housing.164 States parties should furthermore make sure that the price of housing is proportionate to income levels.165

4) Habitability. Housing accommodations should shield individuals from the “cold, damp, heat, rain, wind or other threats to health, structural hazards, and disease vectors” and should contain an adequate amount of space for its inhabitants.166

5) Accessibility. All individuals should have equal access to housing.167 However, disadvantaged groups should have some degree of priority in obtaining adequate housing, and housing law and policy should not discriminate against these groups.168

6) Location. Housing should be located in communities with access to various opportunities and services, such as employment, education, health care, and other social amenities.169

7) Cultural Adequacy. Finally, housing should not infringe upon cultural identity or appreciation, but should allow for cultural expression and diversity celebration.170

C. Successful Housing Rights Models

Though many countries have ratified the ICESCR and thereby enacted a right to housing in their respective nations, two countries stand out as global paragons of housing rights. The

162 Id. at ¶ 8 (b).
163 Id.
164 Id. at ¶ 8 (c).
165 Id.
166 Id. at ¶ 8 (d).
167 Id. at ¶ 8 (e).
168 Id.
169 Id. at ¶ 8 (f).
170 Id. at ¶ 8 (g).
United States should look to these nations as models in order to most effectively eliminate homelessness and thereby eradicate criminalization.

1. **Scotland**

The United Kingdom ratified the ICESCR in 1976.\(^{171}\) Scotland then promulgated a right to housing in 1987. The Housing Act of 1987 established a priority right to housing for individuals experiencing homelessness as the result of an emergency.\(^{172}\) In 1999, Scotland established a Homelessness Task Force,\(^{173}\) which “review[ed] the causes and nature of homelessness in Scotland; . . . examine[ed] [the] current practice in dealing with cases of homelessness; and . . . ma[de] recommendations” on how to effectively prevent and eliminate homelessness.\(^{174}\) Under the Homelessness Task Force’s recommendations, Scotland passed the Homelessness Etc. Act of 2003.\(^{175}\) This law abolished the priority need test and secured a right to accommodation for all individuals experiencing homelessness.\(^{176}\)

Under the 1987 law, Scottish authorities were only required to secure accommodation for individuals with priority need that were experiencing homelessness unintentionally.\(^{177}\) Under the new Homelessness Etc. Act, authorities are now required to secure “settled” accommodation for all individuals experiencing homelessness unintentionally.\(^{178}\) Settled accommodation includes both permanent and non-permanent housing.\(^{179}\) Permanent accommodation is available through a Scottish Secure Tenancy, a Short Scottish Secure Tenancy, and an assured tenancy acquired

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\(^{171}\) ICESCR, *supra* note 9.

\(^{172}\) Housing (Scotland) Act, 1987, c. 25, § 1 (d).

\(^{173}\) NAT’L LAW CTR. ON HOMELESSNESS AND POVERTY, HOUSING RIGHTS FOR ALL: PROMOTING AND DEFENDING HOUSING RIGHTS IN THE UNITED STATES 36 (5th ed. 2011).

\(^{174}\) SCOTTISH EXECUTIVE, HOMELESSNESS TASK FORCE, HELPING HOMELESS PEOPLE: AN ACTION PLAN FOR PREVENTION AND EFFECTIVE RESPONSE ¶ 1 (2002).

\(^{175}\) NAT’L LAW CTR. ON HOMELESSNESS AND POVERTY, *supra* note 133, at 64.

\(^{176}\) Homelessness etc. (Scotland) Act, 2003, § 5.

\(^{177}\) Housing (Scotland) Act, c. 31.

\(^{178}\) *Id.* at 8-9.

\(^{179}\) *Id.* at 8.
through private landlords.\textsuperscript{180} Non-permanent accommodations are available when permanent accommodations are inappropriate.\textsuperscript{181} However, even if an individual has acquired temporary housing, the duty to secure adequate housing is not fulfilled until permanent housing is obtained.\textsuperscript{182}

Scotland’s sweeping legislative initiatives to eliminate homelessness have had a positive effect on the status of homelessness in the nation. Since enacting these laws, Scotland has seen a decline in homelessness overall,\textsuperscript{183} especially “rough sleeping,” or unsheltered homelessness.\textsuperscript{184} Commentators attribute the decline in homelessness to such legislative and administrative measures.\textsuperscript{185}

2. France

Another country to which the United States should look that recently enacted a right to housing is France. France acceded the ICESCR in 1980,\textsuperscript{186} but until recently had not taken significant action to enforce the right to housing. In 2006, the activist group Children of Don Quixote set up a tent city in a posh area of Paris in order to raise awareness of homelessness issues and call attention to the disparate housing conditions in France.\textsuperscript{187} In 2007, in large part as

\textsuperscript{180} Id. at 9.
\textsuperscript{184} Id.
\textsuperscript{185} Id. in 2009-10, 38,006 individuals experiencing homelessness applied for an entitlement to housing under the Homelessness Etc. Act. 61\% of these individuals were able to secure settled accommodation. Most of this housing – 88\% - was in the social rented sector, a 75\% increase since 2002-03. KATE BERRY, HOMELESSNESS: SUBJECT PROFILE SPICE BRIEFING SB 11/36, at 9-10 (Scottish Parliament Information Centre 2011), available at http://www.scottish.parliament.uk/ResearchBriefingsAndFactsheets/S4/SB__11-36.pdf.
\textsuperscript{186} ICESCR, supra note 9.
\textsuperscript{187} Marie Loison, The Implementation of an Enforceable Right to Housing in France, 1 EURO. J. OF HOMELESSNESS 185, 188 (2007).
a response to these measures by social activist groups, the French government passed a law promulgating the right to housing.\textsuperscript{188}

The French housing law, \textit{le Droit au Logement Opposable} (DALO), guarantees decent and suitable housing for all individuals residing in France.\textsuperscript{189} Initially, DALO prioritized the right to housing for individuals with the most immediate need.\textsuperscript{190} In January 2012, the right expanded to include those who qualified but had not yet acquired housing.\textsuperscript{191}

The French law is modeled after Scotland’s law and contains many similar provisions, including an expansive definition of homelessness and, perhaps most importantly, legal enforceability.\textsuperscript{192} Individuals who qualify for an entitlement to housing under DALO\textsuperscript{193} undergo a review by a mediation committee.\textsuperscript{194} The mediation committee must decide whether an individual has priority status and is therefore entitled to emergency shelter.\textsuperscript{195} If individuals determined to have emergency need do not obtain emergency housing within a three or six month time period, they are entitled to appeal to an administrative court.\textsuperscript{196}

\textsuperscript{188} Id. at 189.
\textsuperscript{190} Loison, \textit{supra} note 187, at 189.
\textsuperscript{191} Id.
\textsuperscript{192} Loi 2007-290 du 5 mars 2007.
\textsuperscript{193} Qualifications include individuals “in good faith” with a) no housing; b) individuals at risk for eviction without having acquired other forms of housing; c) individuals residing in temporary or transitional housing; d) individuals housed in “premises unfit for human habitation or otherwise unhealthy or dangerous;” e) individuals housed in an over-crowded or inadequate facility; f) individuals with disabilities; and g) guardians of minor children or individuals who have at least one dependent child with a disability. \textit{Id.} at art. 7.
\textsuperscript{194} Id.
\textsuperscript{195} Id.
An administrative court in France upheld DALO for the first time in 2008. The petitioner in the case, Namizata Fofana, a 26 year-old woman raising two children and living in a shelter, had repeatedly applied for housing accommodation, beginning in 2005. When the French government passed DALO, Fofana applied for priority housing, but was denied by the mediation committee assigned to her case. The mediation committee concluded that Fofana had priority status but her housing needs were not urgent. Fofana requested judicial review through the administrative court. The court awarded Fofana permanent housing after it ruled that the mediation committee unlawfully denied her right to housing. Though Fofana’s case is the only legal challenge to a violation under DALO to date, it illustrates that a justiciable right to housing is possible with a human rights framework.

The Homelessness Etc. Act of 2003 and the DALO law are proven paragons of effective housing rights legislation. Scotland and France’s shared legislative and judicial similarities with the United States make their laws particularly useful for the United States. The United States should look to these models to effectively eliminate homelessness and its criminalization.

D. Implications of ICESCR Ratification and Housing Rights Enactment

Criminalization exists because the United States has failed to effectively address and combat homelessness. Rather than criminalizing homelessness, the United States should allocate

199 Id.
200 Id.
more resources towards eliminating both criminalization and homelessness. The United States can best accomplish this by ratifying the ICESCR. Ratifying the ICESCR will establish a right to housing in a human rights framework. The implications of enacting a right to housing are threefold. First, a human rights lens will create a common legal framework in which to address and effectively challenge criminalization. Second, a human rights framework will initiate the paradigm shift necessary to most adequately eliminate homelessness. Third, ratifying the ICESCR will increase access to beneficial international resources.

First, ratifying the ICESCR and implementing a right to housing will establish a common legal framework in which to approach homelessness and its criminalization.204 Though Eighth Amendment protection from criminalization is still fairly strong under the Robinson Doctrine, a right to housing will bolster this protection and hamper criminalization. A human rights framework and the right to housing will allow judicial decision makers to more effectively assess laws that target individuals experiencing homelessness. Under a right to housing, a law that criminalizes homelessness in effect criminalizes the failure to exercise the right to housing. The Eighth Amendment restricts the kinds and severity of punishment inflicted for a certain crime, but the Eighth Amendment also “imposes substantive limits on what can be made criminal and punished as such.”205 Arresting someone for not exercising their right to housing would certainly constitute cruel and unusual punishment.

A human rights framework will also incite the paradigm shift necessary to eliminate homelessness and its stigmatization. Negative social attitudes about homelessness have stigmatized the status and denied individuals experiencing homelessness of their social worth.206 Such attitudes have perpetuated the prejudice and injustice that underlie criminalization. A

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204 Nat’l Law Ctr. on Homelessness and Poverty, supra note 173, at 15. See also Stark, supra note 144, at 80.
206 Nat’l Law Ctr. on Homelessness and Poverty, supra note 173, at 18.
human rights framework will dismantle discriminatory and stereotypical attitudes by affirming the autonomy and dignity of all persons.\textsuperscript{207}

Changing societal attitudes by increasing understanding and empathy can furthermore lead to a comprehensive policy shift in the way a government addresses and responds to homelessness.\textsuperscript{208} Assimilating human rights principles into legislation addressing homelessness can help a nation internalize those norms.\textsuperscript{209} In the United States, this can help develop the governmental posture required to eliminate homelessness.\textsuperscript{210}

Finally, ratifying the ICESCR and implementing a right to housing will increase access to additional review processes and international resources. Upon ratification, the Human Rights Council will include adherence to the ICESCR in its Universal Period Review of the United States. The Universal Periodic Review examines each State party’s commitment to and fulfillment of international human rights obligations.\textsuperscript{211} A State party is subject to review based on the human rights obligations in “(1) the UN Charter; (2) the Universal Declaration of Human Rights; (3) human rights instruments to which the State is party (human rights treaties ratified by the State concerned); (4) voluntary pledges and commitments made by the State (e.g. national human rights policies and/or programmes implemented); and, (5) applicable international humanitarian law.”\textsuperscript{212} The Human Rights Council includes in its final reports comments regarding a State party’s adherence to human rights obligations as well as recommendations for

\textsuperscript{208} Byrne & Culhane, supra note 157, at 384.
\textsuperscript{209} Ann M. Piccard, The United States’ Failure to Ratify the International Covenant on Economic, Social & Cultural Rights: Must the Poor Always Be with Us?, 13 SCHOLAR 231, 255 (2010).
\textsuperscript{210} Id.
\textsuperscript{211} G.A. Res. 60/251, ¶ 5 (e), U.N. Doc. A/RES/60/251 (March 15, 2006).
the State party to bolster human rights fulfillments.\textsuperscript{213} The Universal Periodic Review can help the United States monitor its human rights obligations and ensure adherence to both the ICESCR and the ICCPR.

Ratifying the ICESCR will also allow access to the Economic and Social Council’s periodic review. Upon ratification the United States commits to reporting practices that discuss its adherence to ICESCR obligations.\textsuperscript{214} After reviewing these reports, the Economic and Social committee can submit to the General Assembly recommendations for the United States to undertake.\textsuperscript{215} This additional review process specific to obligations contained in the ICESCR can help the United States most effectively implement the specific human right to housing.

V. Objection: The Lindsey Precedent

Perhaps the strongest argument against implementing a right to housing in the United States is the Supreme Court’s decision in \textit{Lindsey v. Normet}. The plaintiffs in \textit{Lindsey} challenged an Oregon law on Due Process and Equal Protection grounds, claiming a “need for decent shelter” and the “right to retain peaceful possession of one’s own home.”\textsuperscript{216} The Court ruled,

\begin{quote}

\textit{[w]e do not denigrate the importance of decent, safe, and sanitary housing. But the Constitution does not provide judicial remedies for every social and economic ill. We are unable to perceive in that document any constitutional guarantee of access to dwellings of a particular quality, or any recognition of the right of a tenant to occupy the real property of his landlord beyond the term of his lease without the payment of rent or otherwise contrary to the terms of the relevant agreement. Absent constitutional mandate, the assurance of adequate housing and the definition of landlord-tenant relationships are legislative, not judicial, functions.}\textsuperscript{217}
\end{quote}

Thus, under the \textit{Lindsey} decision, the Constitution does not guarantee a right to housing.
However, there are several reasons why *Lindsey* is not precedent for a human right to housing as described in the ICESCR. First, the *Lindsey* Court ruled that there is no right to housing *of a particular quality*, and did not rule on the right to any housing at all.\(^{218}\) Other courts have also mentioned the *Lindsey* decision, but many have done so only in terms of housing adequacy.\(^{219}\) Moreover, General Comment 4, while instrumental in clarifying what “adequate” means, is not binding on States parties. The United Nations furthermore recognizes that the achievement of each component of adequate housing may not be feasible for every State party. Article 2 of the ICESCR even states that each State party is only required to enact the right to housing “to the maximum of its available resources.”\(^{220}\)

Second, the *Lindsey* Court focused on the terms of the lease in question, which evidences its assumption that such housing must necessarily be free.\(^{221}\) However, the ICESCR does not require that any housing be provided free of charge.\(^{222}\) Taking in conjunction the *Lindsey* Court’s focus on housing quality and cost, it is possible to ignore its decision as housing rights precedence in the United States.\(^{223}\)

**VI. Conclusion**

The United States is plagued by a paradigm of criminalization. Municipalities are increasingly enacting and discriminatorily enforcing public order laws that criminalize basic life-sustaining conduct that unsheltered individuals experiencing homelessness must necessarily

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\(^{218}\) Nat’l Law Ctr. on Homelessness and Poverty, *supra* note 173, at 118.

\(^{219}\) Id. See also e.g., United Farmworkers of Florida Housing Project v. Delray Beach, 493 F.2d 799, 808 (5th Cir. 1974). (“We should note here that the farmworkers’ appeal is not based primarily upon a claim of a denial of a fundamental right to decent housing, see *Lindsey* v. Normet . . . .”)

\(^{220}\) ICESCR, *supra* note 9, at art. 2 (1).

\(^{221}\) Nat’l Law Ctr. on Homelessness and Poverty, *supra* note 173, at 118.

\(^{222}\) Fact Sheet No. 21, *The Right to Adequate Housing*, *supra* note 54, at 6. Moreover, the obligations set forth in the ICESCR are slightly more lenient than those in the ICCPR and would allow for compromises in order for a nation to fulfill its provision commitments. This makes the *Lindsey* decision more compatible with ICESCR obligations. Meyer, *supra* note 122, at xxxiv.

perform in public. Unsheltered individuals experiencing homelessness must necessarily live in public, and are therefore categorically destined to break the law. Criminalization violates the Eighth Amendment’s protection against cruel and unusual punishment. Criminalization also violates the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights as well as the United States’ obligations to the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights.

Homelessness is a prima facie violation of the human right to housing, but the United States does not recognize this right. The United States’ failure to evaluate homelessness and its criminalization through a human rights lens has both perpetuated criminalization and prevented the United States from effectively eliminating homelessness. Though some lawsuits have successfully challenged the constitutionality of criminalization measures, an appropriate and effective legal framework in which to assess these public order laws has evaded American jurisprudence.

The best way to eradicate criminalization is to establish a human rights framework and the human right to housing. The United States should enact and implement a domestic right to housing by ratifying the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, using Scottish and French models as successful examples. Such measures will establish a common legal framework in which to address laws targeting individuals experiencing homelessness, and will provide the United States with a more effective way to eliminate homelessness. A right to housing will most appropriately shift governmental efforts from unconstitutional measures and inadequate emergency responses to permanent solutions. A human rights framework is the best hope to transform the national conversation on homelessness from misunderstanding and intolerance to recognition and respect.