



UN Calls for National Water “Affordability Standard” in America

As more than one billion people [oppressed under United Nations member regimes struggle to live on less than \\$1 a day](#), the UN’s “human rights” brigades visited Detroit this week — where the average welfare benefits amount to almost \$30,000 per year — to call for a national “affordability standard” for water. According to the planetary human-rights bureaucrats, the taxpayers and the bankrupt city government must continue to provide water even for residents who have not paid their bill in months because apparently free water services are now among the “most basic human rights.”



The UN delegation to Detroit included two operatives with bombastic titles: “Special Rapporteur on the human right to water and sanitation” Catarina de Albuquerque, and Leilani Farha, dubbed “the Special Rapporteur on the right to adequate housing.” In a [press release](#) posted on the dictator-dominated organization’s website, the duo “expressed concern” over the water shut-offs that have been taking place in Detroit as city officials seek to collect on seriously delinquent accounts. The two had [previously called for “international law” to be enforced](#) amid what they said was a violation of the UN’s bizarre notions of “human rights.”

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“It is contrary to human rights to disconnect water from people who simply do not have the means to pay their bills,” said de Albuquerque in the UN press release following the two-day propaganda visit to Detroit, apparently unaware that a recent study revealed average state and federal welfare benefits in Michigan pay \$28,872 per year. “I heard testimonies from poor, African American residents of Detroit who were forced to make impossible choices — to pay the water bill or to pay their rent.”

The average rent in Detroit is about \$800, which, for somebody bringing in more than \$80 per day based on average welfare benefits, should leave about \$20,000 per year to pay water bills and other expenses — if they live alone. According to the Detroit Free Press, the average water bill in the city comes to about \$65 per month, or less than \$800 every year. In other words, average water bills and rents combined should cost around \$10,000 per year, leaving an average welfare recipient with more than \$18,000 left to spend. Gallup data suggests that \$18,000 is about twice the median household income worldwide.

Apparently that is not enough for the UN’s dictator-dominated human rights bureaucracy, which was disbanded some years ago after Libyan dictator Moammar Gadhafi was elected by UN member regimes to lead it. Today, the self-styled UN “Human Rights Council” [includes such paragons of human rights](#) as the communist regimes ruling Cuba and China, among others. The Saudi monarchy, which literally



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beheads “apostates,” serves on the council, too. It also recently added the regime ruling El Salvador, headed by a “former” communist mass-murderer who led a bloody Castro-backed campaign to overthrow the former government.

Instead of dealing with real human-rights abuses, however, the UN body has increasingly [stepped up its attacks on America](#) and other civilized nations for protecting liberty, having low taxes, stay-at-home moms, and more. For instance, in recent years, the UN body has [lashed out at the United States](#) for its protections of the right to keep and bear arms, parental rights, the right to a fair trial, state sovereignty, self-defense rights, and much more. The U.S. Constitution and the American system of government have also been [placed openly in UN crosshairs](#).

As if to drive home the UN’s ignorance of — or hostility toward — the U.S. system of limited government and federalism, “Special Rapporteur” de Albuquerque made a series of outlandish demands that would put the federal government in direct violation of the contract that created it. “First, we suggest that the city of Detroit restores water connections to all residents unable to pay, and also to stop any further disconnections of water in those cases,” she was quoted as saying. “We also urge the city, the state, but also the national government ... to adopt a mandatory affordability standard.” Of course, the “national government” has no constitutional authority to create any such standard.

The other UN “special rapporteur,” Farha, played the race card, saying that mostly blacks were affected by the shut-offs (because mostly blacks live in Detroit). “Every effort should be made by all levels of government to ensure that the most vulnerable are not evicted from or lose their housing as a result of water shut-offs or water bill arrears,” decreed Farha. “Where an individual or family is rendered homeless due to water shut-offs, the City of Detroit must have in place emergency services to ensure alternate accommodation with running water is available.”

She also demanded what sounded like a parallel legal system to challenge the municipal water provider’s billing. “If you have a dispute about a bill, you need an administrative remedy to that dispute,” Farha said. “If you want to challenge the affordability of water in the city of Detroit, you need a legal mechanism to do that.” It was not clear under what supposed authority the UN bureaucrats were purporting to issue commands to local, state, and federal authorities in the United States.

Local officials, though, hit back at the UN bureaucrats. Mayor Mike Duggan’s top aide, Alexis Wiley, blasted the UN “review” as one-sided, saying the office was “very disappointed” with the “rapporteurs” and their supposed probe. “They weren’t interested in the facts,” she explained. “They took a position and never once [before Monday] reached out to the city for data.” Indeed, as [The New American reported in June](#), the same UN operatives made virtually the same claims before their “investigation” based on complaints about Detroit by radical Canadian activists submitted to the UN.

According to local officials, currently presiding over the largest municipal bankruptcy in U.S. history, the city shuts off water services to businesses and residents who are either two months past due on their bills or who owe more than \$150. It also has a variety of programs to help residents who get behind on their payments, including offering payment plans to delinquent account holders. Among those whose services were disconnected: a city council member, the Joe Louis Arena that hosts the NHL Detroit Red Wings team, and the NFL Detroit Lions’ Ford Field, according to media reports.

While the UN frames the issue as a “human rights violation,” it is important to keep some crucial facts in mind. The latest UN attack on American policies comes amid a concerted global campaign, led by the UN and the globalist establishment, to redefine the very notion of rights. In the United States, as the



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Declaration of Independence and the U.S. Constitution make crystal clear, individual rights come from God and cannot be legitimately infringed upon by government. In fact, the Founders pointed out that the whole purpose of government is to protect unalienable rights.

Under the UN's vision, by contrast, revocable privileges are granted by all-powerful governments, which are permitted to infringe on those pseudo-rights at will. In its "Universal Declaration of Human Rights," the UN even states its abhorrent position that what it inaccurately refers to as "rights" are "granted" by governments, not the Creator. The global entity also claims "rights" can be limited "by law," and that no rights may be "exercised contrary to the purposes and principles of the United Nations." The declaration also claims everyone has "duties" to the "community."

Rather than freedom from coercion — free speech, freedom of the press, the right to keep and bear arms, the right to be secure from unreasonable searches, and more — the UN admittedly views rights in totalitarian terms, such as the "right" to the fruits of others' labor. Like communist and socialist dictators worldwide, the UN justifies its existence partly based on the dangerous notion that taxpayer-funded goods and services can be considered "rights" to be enforced by the coercive power of government.

The difference between the visions, of course, is crucial: Real rights are freedom from government coercion; UN "rights" require government coercion. For more evidence of the UN's view of "human rights," simply consider the brutal assortment of communist, socialist, Islamist, and mass-murdering tyrants on the UN "Human Rights Council." Late last year, even the regimes ruling China, Cuba, Vietnam, Algeria, Saudi Arabia, and Russia — among the worst violators of actual rights on Earth — were appointed to the council.

What Detroit needs is not UN bureaucrats, more welfare, or a redefinition of rights to conform to failed and murderous totalitarian models of the last century. Instead, as countless studies have demonstrated, good government, economic liberty, and protection for unalienable rights produces abundant prosperity for all — that is why the United States, Canada, and Switzerland are among the richest countries on Earth while Cuba, North Korea, and Zimbabwe are the poorest.

For now, the UN "human rights" outfit acknowledged that it has no authority to impose its wild demands. However, if Americans are not careful, that will not always be the case. Rather than continue to play along with the anti-liberty and anti-sovereignty antics of the UN — widely ridiculed as the "dictators' club," and for good reason — the U.S. government should defund and withdraw from the outfit immediately.



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