

UN human rights expert to visit Spain to assess poverty

GENEVA (23 January 2020) – The UN Special Rapporteur on extreme poverty and human rights, Philip Alston, will undertake a fact-finding visit to Spain from 27 January to 7 February 2020 to investigate poverty in the country.

“Spain has the fifth largest economy in Europe and yet has strikingly high levels of poverty. This raises real questions about who has benefitted from recent growth and who has been left behind,” said Alston. “It is noteworthy that more than a decade after the financial crisis, and following an impressive economic recovery, many of Spain’s poverty and inequality indicators are well above pre-crisis levels.”

In Spain, 26.1 percent of the population lives at risk of [poverty](#) or social exclusion, up from 23.8 percent in 2008, making it one of the [highest rates](#) in Europe. Roughly [half](#) the population have some difficulty making ends meet, and poverty is persistently higher for [children](#), [migrants](#), and [Roma](#) populations. Spain’s unemployment rate is more than [double](#) the EU average, and there is a concerning [rise](#) of in-work poverty. The country also spends significantly [less](#) than the EU average on many forms of social support.

“Spain’s new Government has committed to improving the economic and social wellbeing of people, and my visit so early in its term provides an opportunity to assess the situation and recommend how the Government can best support those in poverty,” Alston said.

The UN expert will travel to Madrid, Galicia, Basque Country, Extremadura, Andalucía and Catalonia. He will meet with government officials and individuals affected by poverty, as well as activists, academics, and representatives of civil society organisations. A [preliminary schedule](#) of the Special Rapporteur’s visit, including information on select events open to press, is available on his webpage.

“I plan to look closely at how Spain’s social protection system works for those in poverty, as well as the situation for those in precarious work or who face challenges accessing adequate housing, education and healthcare, particularly among vulnerable populations,” Alston said.

The visit by the Special Rapporteur will be grounded in extensive input and research in advance of the mission, including a thorough review of public information, more than 60 advance telephone interviews and some 40 written submissions from people affected by poverty, civil society, academics and others. The submissions made public with the authors’ consent are available [here](#).

The Special Rapporteur will hold a news conference to share his preliminary observations and recommendations at 12 pm on Friday 7 February at the UN World Tourism Organisation, Calle del Poeta Joan Maragall, 42, Madrid.

His final report will be presented to the UN Human Rights Council in Geneva in June 2020.

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Philip Alston (Australia) took up his functions as the [Special Rapporteur on extreme poverty and human rights](#) in June 2014. As a Special Rapporteur, he is part of what is known as the [Special Procedures](#) of the Human Rights Council. Special Procedures, the largest body of independent experts in the UN Human Rights system, is the general name of the Council's independent fact-finding and monitoring mechanisms that address either specific country situations or thematic issues in all parts of the world. Special Procedures' experts work on a voluntary basis; they are not UN staff and do not receive a salary for their work. They are independent from any government or organization and serve in their individual capacity.

Follow the Special Rapporteur on **Twitter** [@Alston_UNSR](#) and **Facebook** at www.facebook.com/AlstonUNSR

UN human rights, Country Page: [Spain](#)

For more information and **media requests**, please contact: Junko Tadaki (+41 79-201-0123; jtadaki@ohchr.org) and Bassam Khawaja (+1 646 886 7211; bassam.khawaja@nyu.edu)

For media inquiries related to other UN independent experts: The Media Unit (+ 41 22 928 9855 / mediaconsultant2@ohchr.org)

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A preliminary schedule of the Special Rapporteur's visit, including select events open to press (subject to change):

January 27: Madrid

- Meeting with Ministry of Foreign Affairs and other ministries
- Meeting with people with experience of Madrid's minimum income scheme
- Meeting with the Spanish Ombudsman
- Meeting with families affected by poverty *****open to press by request*****

January 28: Galicia

- Meeting with Galicia government
- Meeting with people experiencing poverty in Santiago de Compostela
- Meeting with people with disabilities in Medelo *****open to press by request*****
- Visit to school and meeting with families affected by social exclusion and risk of poverty in Monfero

January 29: Basque Country

- Meeting with Basque Country government
- Meeting with homeless people in Bilbao
- Meeting with families and children affected by poverty in Bilbao *****open to press by request*****

January 30: Extremadura

- Meeting with Extremadura government
- Meeting with people experiencing poverty in Merida
- Meeting with women affected by poverty in Badajoz *****open to press by request*****
- Meeting with Badajoz municipal government
- Meeting with people affected by rural poverty in Villafranca de los Barros

January 31: Andalucía

- Meeting with Andalucía government
- Meeting with school administration
- Visit to Polígono Sur and meeting with families
- Visit to Los Pajaritos and meeting with families
- Meeting with migrant workers in Huelva

February 1: Catalonia

- Meeting on housing issues in Barcelona
- Meeting with Catalonia government
- Meeting with the Catalan Ombudsman
- Meeting with people affected by energy poverty in Barcelona *****press availability before meeting*****
- Meeting with people with experience of Catalonia's minimum income scheme in Barcelona

February 2: Madrid

- Meeting with migrant domestic workers *****open to press by request*****
- Visit to housing block and meeting with tenants in Torrejón de Ardoz *****open to press *****
- Visit to Cañada Real
- Town hall event with people experiencing poverty *****open to press*****

February 3: Madrid

- Meeting with Madrid government
- Visit to social services center
- Meetings with civil society

February 4: Madrid

- Meeting with the High Commissioner for the Fight Against Child Poverty
- Meeting with the Independent Authority for Fiscal Responsibility
- Meeting with the Ministry of Health, Consumption and Social Well-being
- Meeting with the Ministry of the Treasury
- Meeting with the Ministry of Education and Vocational Training
- Meeting with civil society

February 5: Madrid

- Meeting with members of the Congress of Deputies
- Meeting with the Ministry of the Presidency, Parliamentary Relations and Equality
- Meeting with the Ministry of Development and Secretary General for Housing
- Meeting with the Ministry of Work, Migrations and Social Security
- Meeting with the Ministry of Ecological Transition

February 6: Madrid

No events scheduled

February 7: Madrid

- Meeting with Ministry of Foreign Affairs and other ministries
- Press conference in Madrid *****open to press*****