



Language

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### Introduction

Having a home, like having a job, is a basic requirement, but in many cities the poor find that right threatened. Tenants may be faced with rents too high for them to pay, with the consequent threat of serious debt or eviction. Organized rent strikes have therefore been an important method of resistance. A famous example is the 1915 rent strike against landlords raising rents by women in Glasgow, whilst their men were engaged in the war. The refusal to pay the increase spread across the city and to other parts of Britain. When a landlord took some of his tenants to court, workers in the Clyde shipyards and munitions factories went on strike and others demonstrated in protest. The government was forced by this combined show of solidarity to legislate to prevent rent rises during the war. Rent strikes have also been used in many parts of the world since 1945.

Poor areas of cities are also quite often scheduled for drastic redevelopment, resulting in the eviction of thousands from their homes and destruction of their neighbourhoods; moreover 'slum' clearance does not always result in alternative provision of new housing. Redevelopment in many cities round the world may be part of a process of gentrification, but is also a strategy of governments hosting prestigious international exhibitions or sporting events, such as the Olympics, and has often been met by determined local resistance and wider protests. Those who are homeless, for whatever reason, have quite often adopted a strategy of taking over empty houses or buildings, or seizing land to build on. Squatter movements have highlighted the lack of affordable housing and in some cases created new radical communities within cities. Urban resistance movements may focus on other targets – for example protests and riots in response to police brutality, and in some cases have revolutionary aspirations and implications. Two theoretical analyses of urban revolt, which cover a wide range of urban movements in different parts of the world, are:

Castells, Manuel, [The City and the Grassroots: A Cross-Cultural Theory of Urban Social Movements](#) [1], [1983], Berkeley CA, University of California Press, 1992, pp. 471

Harvey, David, [Rebel Cities: From the Right to the City to the Urban Revolution](#) [2], London, Verso, 2012, pp. 208

See also *Red Pepper*, Apr/May 2018, pp. 13-17 for a wide-ranging analysis. Key issues about the safety of housing for the poor were raised in 2017 when 71 people are known to have died in a rapidly spreading fire in a tower block in north Kensington in London. The Grenfell fire raised major issues about the safety of tower blocks across the UK, the responsibility of builders, local authorities and safety inspectorates for inadequate checks on standards, and the dangers of opting for cheaper solutions. Grenfell also dramatised the gap between the relatively poor and racially diverse tenants of Grenfell living in social housing and the rich residents of the borough and the Conservative Council. A major long-running enquiry has been set up, viewed with some distrust by former Grenfell residents and the local community. Campaigning groups such as Justice4Grenfell and Grenfell Speaks have been set up complaining about lack of respect and representation, and people in other major cities have joined in solidarity protests.



## A.2. Urban Campaigns against High Rents, Forces Evictions and Homelessness

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### Links

[1] <https://civilresistance.info/biblio-item/1992/city-and-grassroots-cross-cultural-theory-urban-social-movements> [2]  
<https://civilresistance.info/biblio-item/2012/rebel-cities-right-city-urban-revolution>