



AS IT IS

## Millions of US Renters Face Eviction

August 29, 2020

Tiana Caldwell of Kansas City, Missouri is one of millions of Americans who face being moved out of their homes by the end of the year.

This kind of forced removal is a result of the economic problems and job losses caused by the coronavirus outbreak. That information comes from the National Low Income Housing Coalition, a national housing group.

Caldwell lost her job and was in treatment for cancer when she and her family were **evicted** in 2019.

“We were doing good, and then I got cancer...again. So, I was actively in treatment when we were being evicted...It was a bad experience.”

Caldwell is now unemployed and has a hard time paying rent - money paid for the use of a property. She is organizing protests with KC Tenants, a group that supports **affordable** housing in Kansas City, Missouri.

### Facing eviction

KC Tenants Director Tara Raghuvue told VOA that nearly 50 percent of renters in the state of Missouri are at risk of eviction because they cannot pay their rent.

“Tens of thousands of renters in the state of Missouri were paying over 50% of their income to rent before the pandemic, and now...hundreds of thousands are unemployed or have been unemployed through some period of this pandemic.”

## Federal assistance

Many Americans have been receiving financial assistance through state and federal unemployment payments. But the federal assistance of \$600 a week ended in late July. Activists say that millions of people are in danger of not being able to pay their rent.

Housing rights supporters are calling for rent aid and an extension of eviction prevention measures. Gina Chiala heads the Heartland Center for Jobs and Freedom. The group provides legal advice about housing to poor workers in Kansas City, Missouri. Chiala said the federal government should find permanent ways to deal with housing problems for the poor.

Chiala and other housing activists want property owners to work with their **tenants** to negotiate lower payments when possible.

About 40 percent of the nation's rental properties are owned by independent **landlords**. Many cannot take the losses from unpaid rent.

Tracey Benson is president and founder of the National Association of Independent Landlords. The association provides help and support to its 200,000 members nationwide.

Benson said her organization is getting calls from concerned landlords all the time. She said they are worried about losing not only their rental properties but their own homes.

Kathy Phillips is an association member in North Carolina. She owns 10 rental properties that she depends on as her only way to make a living. One of her renters has been falling behind on rent payments.

“She's a single parent and I don't feel comfortable evicting a single parent in this climate...”

Phillips offered her at-risk renter a 50 percent reduction on her rent for three months. She does not expect her to repay the difference.

Phillips also said she believes the federal government needs to do more for both renters and landlords.

“I don't think there's a lot of answers until we have income for all these unemployed people,” she said.

I'm Jonathan Evans.

*Julie Taboh reported this story for VOA News. Jonathan Evans adapted her story for Learning English. Mario Ritter, Jr. was the editor.*

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## Words in This Story

**evict** -*v.* to be forced to leave a place

**affordable** -*adj.* at a cost that is not too high or that can be paid

**tenant** -*n.* a person, business or group that pays for the use of another person's property

**landlord** -*n.* a person who owns a property such as a house or building and rents it to other people

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