



## NEWS RELEASE

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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**  
Committee

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### **NO EVICTIONS! WE DEMAND HOUSING NOW!**

On **Wednesday, August 19th, at 12:30 pm**, the Washtenaw General Defense Committee (GDC), in collaboration with a number of local and regional organizations, will picket the 14B District Court in opposition to the eviction hearings that have begun taking place following the end of Michigan's eviction moratorium. We expect at least 50-100 community members to join us in solidarity.

The effects of the COVID-19 pandemic have been devastating for countless communities throughout the United States, especially for those who were already vulnerable. Having reached the end of Governor Whitmer's eviction moratorium, the state of Michigan is now facing a dire crisis. With COVID-19 cases still rising daily and unemployment rates at a historic high--greater than during The Great Depression--the threat of mass evictions during COVID-19 is truly a matter of life and death. Turning thousands of people out of their homes for their inability to pay rent increases human movement and stress, further limits families' resources, and is incompatible with slowing the spread of the virus for all of us. Housing advocates must now fight as hard as they can to stop evictions, slow down those that cannot be stopped, and reduce the harms to those who are evicted. A moratorium blocking evictions en masse is necessary to halt a rise in homelessness and increase in poverty.

Eviction hearings have already begun in our county, and upwards of 10,000 evictions are anticipated in Washtenaw county alone within the next four months. On a single day, August 19th, just one courtroom (14B District Court) is expected to hear a staggering 49 eviction cases -- a testament to the failures of for-profit housing and of our local and state governments, as well as the lack of rental assistance supposedly available for tenants. Taking note of all this, community members, alongside the GDC and other organizations, have decided to come together and resist this criminalization of poverty and disregard for

our safety. We will not accept this status quo and the violence it perpetuates within our community.

Through our action, we demand that the entire state of Michigan place a halt to these punitive attempts at eviction. Washtenaw County has the opportunity to set a precedent in prioritizing human safety over profit by refusing to move forward with any evictions during the COVID-19 pandemic. It must be reiterated that housing is a human right: no one deserves to face eviction, especially during the economic crisis we are experiencing during the COVID-19 pandemic. We will continue to build coalitions, organize, and confront this form of state violence.

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The GDC and co-sponsoring organizations intend to picket the 14B District Court and make it clear to the county that processing evictions, especially during a pandemic, is inexcusable and will not go unseen. A threat to any of our community members, such as loss of housing, is a threat to us all and to public safety during an epidemiological crisis, and we will take action to inform and protect each other at every step.

It must also be noted that the county has begun conducting court hearings via the online video chat application, Zoom. Washtenaw County does not consider internet access a public utility, but it expects residents to be able to attend these online court hearings. In addition, the county has explicitly stated on their website that they will not provide technical support for testing or troubleshooting, that they will terminate the call/video if the quality is not “acceptable”, and that they will not provide the proper technology for residents to utilize Zoom. These policies serve to further criminalize poverty by punishing people who are less likely to have reliable internet access. Especially at a time when public libraries are not fully open, it is not reasonable to assume that each and every resident facing eviction has access to the internet and a working device to use Zoom. Washtenaw County’s refusal to make accommodations is a denial of due process, and we will not accept it.

### **About the Washtenaw General Defense Committee**

The General Defense Committee was formed to defend working-class people fighting for our rights on the picket line and in our community. The capitalist class of bosses, financiers, landlords, and their cops wage relentless and violent class war upon the working class. The goal of the Washtenaw General Defense Committee is to defend and support all working class and oppressed peoples against division and attacks by those who wage class war against us. Through organization, action, and outreach, we therefore promote a mass, non-sectarian defense in order to build a self-organized working class that recognizes our differences as both strengths and opportunities to live in solidarity. Community self-defense means we intend to build a revolutionary movement by defending our class, community, and the Earth on which we live from those who would see it destroyed.