

Los Angeles criminalizes being homeless in the city

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Los Angeles passed a new ordinance on Thursday making it unlawful for homeless people to be in most areas of the city. (Photo by Getty Images)

Los Angeles, August 2 (RHC)-- The mayor of the U.S. city of Los Angeles, Eric Garcetti, has signed a sweeping new rule making it illegal for homeless people to be in almost all places across the city, according to a media report.

Los Angeles, California's largest city, has over 66,000 unhoused people as of the last citywide count, a 12.7 percent increase over the previous year. After implementing the new rule, those thousands of homeless people will now face citations, fines, or misdemeanor charges for being homeless, The Independent reported.

The Los Angeles City Council approved the legislation against the homeless people by 13-2 earlier this week.

"That's what it comes down to for me ... where can people go, where can people sleep when they do not have an alternative," council member Mike Bonin said in the meeting where they approved the ordinance.

Bonin, who himself was homeless, was angry that the city only has shelter capacity to house about 39 percent of its unhoused population any given night. "What about the other 61%?" Bonin asked. "Some of those nights I slept in the car, some of those nights, when my car was in the shop, I slept on the beach. I cannot tell you how much turmoil is in your heart when the sun is setting and you don't know where to sleep."

Lawmakers who have backed the measure said it doesn't criminalize homelessness, but rather regulated homeless encampments that have proliferated in the city in recent years.

Tens of millions of Americans are at the risk of homelessness in large US cities mainly as a result of rising rent prices, and the number of people living on the streets has increased.

The incidence of homelessness is growing faster in the least affordable rental housing markets and cities with skyrocketing home prices, including New York City, Los Angeles, San Francisco and Washington, DC, according to researchers.

In cities with high housing costs, even a modest rent increase can significantly drive up homelessness. In Los Angeles, a 2-percentage point increase in monthly rent could result in an additional 4,000 people finding themselves on the street.

Notably, the rate of homelessness spikes when tenants pay over 32 percent of their income on rent. The rent burden already exceeds that threshold in 100 real estate markets across the United States.

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