

15 January 2015

Dear Social Welfare Department –

We are a group of refugees living in a compound known as the “Slum Like a Favela”, in Yuen Long. We have lived there for a considerable time with the approval of our ISS-HK caseworkers.

Recently our caseworker informed that the structures are dangerous and we must move out immediately. We were informed that after January 2015, ISS-HK will stop rent payments effectively forcing a general eviction. This is not acceptable!

It is not our fault that ISS-HK approved tenancy agreements that confirm our residence at this compound where rent assistance was regularly paid and we are not in breach of our leases, as agreed with and signed by the landlord.

It is unacceptable that we are suddenly ordered to abandon our homes, under threat of suspension of rent payment and further ISS-HK assistance. Our lives and our many belongings cannot be uprooted in a few days.

We are not some kind of chattel, or human garbage, which can be shifted at the order of a government contractor. If our homes were safe and conformed with relevant rules and regulations before, why asking us to leave in hurry now?

It is traumatizing to lose our belongings (furniture, appliances, utensils, clothes, etc.) that cannot be kept in guesthouse rooms. It is quite **impossible to find legal rooms for the budget of 1500\$ being offered**, since prevailing rents in older, cheaper buildings range between 2500 and 3000\$. This means that when we eventually find a new room, we will have to buy furniture, appliances and so on, again. Who pays for this?

We respectfully request that an extension of TWO months be arranged with all parties, including the Lands Department now taking interest in our compound, so that we can find, rent and relocate to acceptable homes.

It is further requested that SWD apply discretion in approving rent assistance **HIGHER THAN 1500\$, or in the alternative**, mobilize SWD officers to identify and contract suitable rooms for our group. This exercise would clearly demonstrate that the rent ceiling imposed on refugees is utterly impractical and unrealistic.

We further invite the Security Bureau to evaluate prevailing market conditions and review its denial of temporary work permits that undermines our welfare package.

Kind regards,

Group signature