# Belfast rally demands an end to no-fault evictions and stronger tenant protections



In Belfast, an anti-eviction rally is set to take place at City Hall, highlighting the need for urgent reforms to protect renters from what activists describe as the "oppressive power" wielded by landlords. Organised by the Community Action Tenants Union (CATU) along with various community groups, the event aims to address the alarming erosion of security for tenants, many of whom face evictions for simply demanding necessary repairs to their homes. Participants will gather at Dunville Park at 12:30pm before marching to City Hall, delivering a message of solidarity and empowerment for renters throughout the region.

Hannah Gibson, chair of CATU Belfast, articulated the struggles faced by working-class communities grappling with the housing crisis. “For too long, private and social landlords have been allowed to evict tenants without cause,” she stated. Gibson underscored that many tenants experience retaliation for asserting their rights, further deepening the need for protective legislation. The ongoing rally is a concerted effort to push back against seemingly casual eviction practices that can displace families and disintegrate communities.

While the introduction of the Private Tenancies Act (Northern Ireland) 2022 aimed to bolster protections for private renters, it conspicuously excluded a ban on no-fault evictions—a loophole that continues to jeopardise tenant security. Activists argue that legislative changes are critically needed to ensure people are not evicted simply for exercising their rights. Sean Doherty of the Beechmount Residents Collective poignantly shared his observations of the fallout from such evictions. “Hundreds of people in my community in west Belfast have been forced out of their homes with nowhere to go,” he revealed, adding that many end up in precarious housing situations far from their communities.

If we look across the UK, legislative efforts are emerging to more systematically abolish no-fault evictions. Recent announcements by the government propose to eliminate Section 21 notices that currently allow landlords to evict tenants without providing adequate justification. The upcoming Renters Reform Bill seeks to create a more balanced marketplace for both landlords and renters, presenting reforms that could significantly empower tenants to challenge unfair practices without the threat of retaliation.

The Northern Ireland Assembly has echoed the call for reforms, passing a recent motion urging action on the housing supply strategy. While Communities Minister Gordon Lyons expressed concern over the complexities of ending no-fault evictions, acknowledging high demand for social housing, the legislative environment is increasingly receptive to reform. Local community initiatives, such as the rally, are intensifying pressure on lawmakers to act decisively to protect vulnerable renters experiencing displacement.

The persistent issue of no-fault evictions has also been raised in the context of rising homelessness figures, with many tenants facing uncertainty as they navigate the complexities of tenancy in a precarious market. Many campaigners view the rally as not just an event but a pivotal moment in the push for systematic changes that prioritise tenant stability.

In summarising the purpose of the rally, Gibson asserted, “We’re sending a clear message to the private and social landlords this weekend - we won’t let you evict us into homelessness and destroy our communities." This sentiment encapsulates an urgent call for legislative action to safeguard tenants' rights and create a more equitable housing landscape.

The nuances surrounding tenant protections in Northern Ireland reflect broader trends across the UK, where various reforms are proposed to ensure greater accountability from landlords and a more robust framework to support renters. As momentum builds around these vital issues, the actions taken by local communities like those in Belfast could play an instrumental role in shaping future tenant rights legislation.

### Reference Map

* Paragraph 1: (1), (2)
* Paragraph 2: (1), (2)
* Paragraph 3: (1), (3), (4)
* Paragraph 4: (1), (2), (4)
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* Paragraph 8: (1), (6), (7)

Source: [Noah Wire Services](https://www.noahwire.com)

## Bibliography

* <https://www.irishnews.com/news/northern-ireland/belfast-anti-eviction-rally-to-highlight-how-renters-rights-are-being-continually-eroded-6G7FGDSVDBAKPL2GQ3F72CWYE4/> - Please view link - unable to able to access data
* <https://www.irishnews.com/news/northern-ireland/belfast-anti-eviction-rally-to-highlight-how-renters-rights-are-being-continually-eroded-6G7FGDSVDBAKPL2GQ3F72CWYE4/> - An anti-eviction rally is scheduled in Belfast to advocate for enhanced protections for renters, including a ban on evictions. The event aims to address the erosion of renters' security, with tenants facing evictions for reasons such as requesting basic property repairs. Organized by the Community Action Tenants Union (CATU) and community groups, participants will gather at Dunville Park before marching to Belfast City Hall. CATU Belfast chair Hannah Gibson emphasized the need for tenants to challenge landlord power and seek protection from retaliatory evictions. The Private Tenancies Act (Northern Ireland) 2022, introduced to strengthen protections for private renters, did not include a ban on no-fault evictions. Sean Doherty of the Beechmount Residents Collective highlighted the severe impact of evictions on the community, leading to homelessness and displacement. The rally serves as a clear message to landlords that tenants will not accept eviction into homelessness and the destruction of their communities.
* <https://www.belfasttelegraph.co.uk/news/uk/no-fault-evictions-to-be-abolished-in-new-renters-bill-queens-speech-confirms/41634167.html> - The UK Government has announced plans to introduce legislation to protect private renters by abolishing no-fault evictions, fulfilling a manifesto pledge. The Renters Reform Bill aims to end Section 21 notices, which allow landlords to evict tenants without providing a reason. The bill also proposes strengthening landlords' rights of possession to create a fair and effective market for both parties. Additionally, a Social Housing Regulation Bill is proposed to enhance social housing tenants' rights and improve landlord accountability, in response to concerns raised by the 2017 Grenfell Tower fire. The Renters Reform Bill includes measures such as stronger possession grounds for repeated rent arrears, reduced notice periods for antisocial behavior, the establishment of an ombudsman for dispute resolution, and a property portal to help landlords understand their responsibilities and provide tenants with performance indicators to hold landlords accountable. The abolition of Section 21 notices is expected to empower renters to challenge poor practices and unfair rent increases without fear of retaliatory eviction. Figures from April showed a significant rise in the number of privately renting households at risk of homelessness due to Section 21 notices, highlighting the need for these reforms.
* <https://www.insidehousing.co.uk/home/northern-ireland-assembly-backs-no-fault-eviction-ban-motion-86150> - The Northern Ireland Assembly has supported a motion calling for the ban of no-fault evictions, highlighting the need for legislative action to protect tenants. The motion, introduced by the Social Democratic and Labour Party (SDLP), urges the communities minister to provide an immediate update on the housing supply strategy and bring forward legislation to ban no-fault evictions in Northern Ireland. Mark Durkan, MLA for the SDLP, emphasized that no-fault evictions are a pervasive practice contributing to increased homelessness and hardship, uprooting the lives of thousands of families. Communities Minister Gordon Lyons expressed concern about the high demand for social housing and the pressures on the private rented sector, acknowledging that security of tenure is a major concern for tenants. While supporting the motion, Lyons noted that ending no-fault evictions is complex and would require a fundamental review of the private tenancy system. The motion was passed, but the amendment was not, indicating a step towards legislative change to protect tenants' rights.
* <https://www.belfastcity.gov.uk/community/housing/harassment-and-unlawful-eviction> - Belfast City Council provides guidance on harassment and unlawful eviction for private tenants. Harassment is defined as any action by a landlord or their representative to make a tenant leave their home, including interfering with utilities, making threats, entering the property without consent, refusing repairs, or making frequent unannounced visits. Unlawful eviction occurs when a landlord forces or attempts to force a tenant from their home without following proper legal procedures, such as changing locks without consent or physically removing a tenant. Landlords must provide a written 'notice to quit' specifying the length of notice required based on the tenancy duration. If a tenant does not leave after the notice period, the landlord must obtain a court order from a magistrates' court. The council offers advice to landlords and tenants, investigates complaints of harassment and unlawful eviction, and prosecutes landlords who have harassed or illegally evicted their tenants. Tenants are advised to record details of any harassment and contact the Housing Rights Mediation Service for dispute resolution.
* <https://www.irishnews.com/news/uk/renters-rights-bill-will-give-greater-protections-and-end-no-fault-evictions-SRUXPVCLZBP7FKUY5KNT2A75FU/> - Labour has proposed the Renters' Rights Bill, aiming to provide greater protections for renters, including ending no-fault evictions. The bill seeks to address issues that campaigners said were not adequately addressed by the previous government's Renters (Reform) Bill, which fell after the general election. The new bill includes measures such as ending Section 21 no-fault evictions, providing new clear and expanded possession grounds for landlords, strengthening tenants' rights to challenge rent increases, and introducing laws to end rental bidding wars. Other aspects include applying Awaab's Law to ensure landlords address hazards and make homes safe, making it illegal for landlords to discriminate against tenants on benefits or with children, and strengthening local councils' enforcement powers to identify and fine unscrupulous landlords. The bill also proposes a new ombudsman service for the private rented sector to settle disputes and a new digital private rented sector database. Campaigners and housing charities have generally welcomed the commitments, viewing them as a step towards restoring hope to renters affected by no-fault evictions.
* <https://www.irishnews.com/news/uk/reforms-to-renters-rights-move-a-step-closer-to-becoming-law-FDNLQ4VLLNLCVCU6CHS7CBN2FA/> - Reforms to renters' rights in the UK have moved closer to becoming law after MPs supported the Renters' Rights Bill, amid warnings that landlords are evicting tenants before the changes can take effect. The bill includes measures such as ending no-fault evictions, stopping bidding wars for tenancies, helping tenants challenge unreasonable rent increases, and preventing landlords from demanding more than a month's rent in advance from new tenants. The House of Commons supported the bill at third reading by 440 votes to 111, and it now progresses to the House of Lords for further scrutiny. However, Conservative MPs warned that more changes to the law could lead to an exodus of landlords, limiting the supply of homes for rent and driving rents up further. The bill's progression indicates a significant step towards enhancing protections for renters in the UK.