

# Detroit Violating Human Rights by Turning Off Water Taps, UN says

By [Press TV](#)

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*The United Nations has condemned the administration of the US city of Detroit for violating the basic human rights of its citizens by turning off their water taps.*

On Monday, a coalition of activist groups appealed to the UN's special rapporteur over reports that cash-strapped residents in Detroit are being disconnected from water services.

According to reports, about half of the Detroit Water and Sewerage customers have not paid their bills.

The department has started cutting off water supplies to these customers on a large scale, three UN rights experts said in a statement issued on Wednesday.

"Disconnection of water services because of failure to pay due to lack of means constitutes a violation of the human right to water and other international human rights," the experts said.

"The households which suffered unjustified disconnections must be immediately reconnected," they added.

In July 2013, Detroit, the birthplace of the US auto industry, became the largest American city to ever file for bankruptcy protection.

In December 2013, a federal judge ruled that Detroit was eligible for bankruptcy in what has become the largest municipal bankruptcy in US history. The city is \$18.5 billion in debt.

Catarina de Albuquerque, an expert on the right to water and sanitation, called on the US government take action to help protect families living in poverty against disconnections.

"When there is genuine inability to pay, human rights simply forbids disconnections," she said.

Leilani Farha, the expert on the right to adequate housing, said that water shutoffs were having devastating consequences, with social services removing children from their homes.

And "if these water disconnections disproportionately affect African Americans they may be discriminatory, in violation of treaties the United States has ratified," she noted.

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