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## Andrej Holm as Berlin State Secretary of Housing. Scientific Expertise into Housing Politics

We, the researchers, scholars and members of the International Network for Urban Research and Action (INURA), welcome the new Senate of Berlin committing to address a pressing concern of Berliners: the need for affordable housing. Adequate housing provision has become increasingly out of reach for many residents – not only in Berlin. Today, the lack of decent affordable housing, displacement pressures and homelessness for low-income groups amidst the upgrading of urban centers, are global phenomena. These are big challenges for cities but research has shown that local governments can counter the exclusionary effects of market distribution of housing. For this task, they need expertise and political will, in order to devise and implement new regulations that protect tenants and promote new investment in fair housing production.

We are therefore gravely concerned about the media-driven political delegitimation campaign directed at Dr. Andrej Holm, who has been appointed as secretary of state for housing by the Berlin Senate.

We know Dr. Holm as an internationally renowned scholar who has pioneered critical research on housing affordability and gentrification. His scholarship has contributed originally to our understanding of the dynamics of market and government forces at play in the provision of housing, and he has advanced urban studies by developing methods to document the dynamics and effects of gentrification. Furthermore, Dr. Holm stands out prominently as public intellectual who, over the years, has offered his expertise to public and political dialogue – courageously questioning the market and state forces that have contributed to spatial segregation and social problems. Moreover, Dr. Holm has proposed constructive policy reforms to address problems of gentrification and segregation, through innovative regulations for the housing market.

If the new Berlin Senate is committed to fulfill its central promise of housing as a basic right for all Berlin residents, it will profit tremendously by the critical, committed and progressive thinking Dr. Holm brings to the design and implementation of policy.

The current attacks on Dr. Holm seek to question his appointment as the new secretary of state for housing in Berlin by highlighting his training with the GDR secret police when he was a teenager. Of course it is a routine procedure to investigate the track record of those slated for public office. But a fair investigation takes time and we have seen no evidence to conclude that Dr. Holm's involvement with the GDR secret police included activities that harmed anybody. The basic principle of presuming innocence must be maintained here.

Almost ten years ago, INURA stepped up to protest against accusations of 'terrorism' directed at Dr. Holm, which turned out to be completely unfounded. Once again we demand from the political representatives of the Berlin government to act fairly and prudently in view of the accusations leveled against Dr. Holm, without succumbing to media spectacle or preemptive judgement. We cannot afford the premature eviction of critical and progressive voices from the political debate on affordable housing for all in Berlin. We therefore encourage all political actors in Berlin to withstand efforts that seek to maintain existing inequalities and to stay the course to achieve a more just city. We know that in this work Dr. Andrej Holm has a vital and unique contribution to offer.

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