NEWS LESSON

What One Eviction Revealed About Spain's Housing Crisis



BEFORE YOU READ

1 Warm up

Talk about these questions with a partner.

1. What makes somewhere feel like home?
2. Would you rather have more space or feel settled in a neighbourhood?
3. Which local place would you miss most if you moved away?

2 Key words

These words are in the article. Write the letter of the meaning (A to H) in each box.

1	**frail**	☐	A	being forced to leave the place where you live
2	**tenancy**	☐	B	good for you; giving you an advantage
3	**favourable**	☐	C	the right to live in a rented home
4	**stakes**	☐	D	upset people because it touched a sensitive subject
5	**struck a nerve**	☐	E	what can be won or lost in a situation
6	**displacement**	☐	F	weak and not in good health, usually because of age
7	**incentive**	☐	G	something that encourages you to do something
8	**remedies**	☐	H	ways of solving a problem

3 Read

Read the article and underline the key words from task 2. The paragraphs are numbered.

Maricarmen Abascal was evicted from the Madrid flat where she had lived for more than 70 years. Her case has become a focus for protests about housing in Spain.

1 Maricarmen Abascal had lived in the same Madrid flat for more than 70 years. At 87, she knew its rooms and the streets around it as home. In September 2026, a long legal dispute ended in her eviction. The case brought a vast housing argument down to one woman's front door.

2 After the property changed hands, Abascal became embroiled in a battle over an older tenancy agreement that allowed her to remain on relatively favourable terms. Campaigners viewed the effort to force her out as an example of the pressure placed on long-standing residents in an increasingly lucrative housing market. On 23 September, despite a gathering of supporters outside the building, the eviction proceeded. Photographs of the frail woman being carried away on a stretcher became a stark illustration of the human stakes of a legal process.

3 Abascal died on 7 October. She had been in poor health, and campaigners said the prolonged conflict caused severe distress. The circumstances prompted widespread outrage, although attributing her death directly to the eviction would go beyond the available medical evidence. An agreement that could have enabled her return had reportedly been reached, but came too late for her to resume living in the flat.

4 Her case prompted protests in Madrid and elsewhere, turning a dispute over one tenancy into an argument about housing policy. Protesters said they wanted the law changed so that nobody in old age could lose a home they had lived in for decades.

5 The pressures are familiar in much of the country. In major cities and popular coastal destinations, demand for housing has risen amid limited supply, tourism and investor interest. Wage growth has not consistently matched the cost of renting or buying, leaving younger workers struggling to establish independent households. Holiday accommodation removes some properties from the longer-term rental market, although its impact varies by location. The cumulative result is a growing sense that employment no longer guarantees access to a secure home.

6 Competing explanations produce competing remedies. Tenant organisations call for greater security, stronger regulation and investment in social housing. Property owners and some economists warn that excessive restrictions may reduce the incentive to rent homes, arguing instead for more construction and a faster planning process. Neither position should obscure the structural complexity of the crisis. The market consists not only of investors seeking returns but also of residents whose social connections and daily routines can be destroyed by displacement.

7 That is why Abascal's story struck a nerve. The law may establish who has the right to occupy a particular flat, but it cannot fully express the significance of decades spent living there. A successful housing policy has to grapple with affordability, supply and legal certainty; it must also acknowledge that a home is not interchangeable with any other address. Behind the arguments about market efficiency lies a simple concern: whether people can remain in the communities to which they have devoted their lives.

Sources: ITV News. Picture: AI illustration.

4 True, false or not given

Circle **T** (true), **F** (false) or **NG** (the article does not say).

1. Abascal died fewer than three weeks after the eviction. T F NG
2. The text treats the claim that the eviction killed her as proven. T F NG
3. The campaigners received legal help from a tenants' union. T F NG
4. The writer suggests that holiday lets are not the only reason for the shortage of long-term rentals. T F NG
5. Tenant organisations and property owners both urge tighter regulation. T F NG

5 Vocabulary

Complete the sentences with words from the box. Two words are not needed.

attributing	cumulative	grapple	interchangeable	marginal	prolonged	stark	tenuous

1. Months of _____ negotiation failed to produce any agreement.
2. There is a _____ contrast between the luxury apartments and the overcrowded flats nearby.
3. No single rent rise was dramatic, but the _____ effect of ten years of increases was severe.
4. The two systems use different standards, so their components are not _____ .
5. Economists caution against _____ the fall in sales to a single cause.
6. Governments continue to _____ with the question of how to fund care for an ageing population.

6 Word forms

Use the word in brackets to make a word that fits the gap.

1. Several residents questioned the _____ of the council's plan. (FEASIBLE)
2. The tenants' association has been _____ in its demand for stronger protection. (PERSIST)
3. Rapid _____ has changed the character of the old quarter. (GENTRIFY)
4. The tenant's _____ to leave was understandable after fifty years in the flat. (RELUCTANT)
5. Critics say the policy is _____ because it ignores the shortage of homes. (SIMPLE)

7 Language focus: linking words

Complete the sentences with words from the box. Two words are not needed. Several of these are formal. Decide whether the gap needs a clause, a noun phrase or an -ing form, and whether it begins the sentence.

albeit **consequently** **inasmuch** **notwithstanding** **thereby** **whereby** **whereupon**

1. The compensation was welcome, _____ far smaller than the campaigners had hoped.
2. _____ the court's ruling, the tenants stayed in the building for another month.
3. Rents have outpaced wages for a decade; _____ , a generation of workers is locked out of ownership.
4. The council cut the number of holiday lets, _____ freeing up hundreds of flats for long-term tenants.
5. The scheme introduced a system _____ tenants can buy their home after twenty years.

SPEAK

8 Talk about it

Discuss in pairs or small groups. Give reasons for your answers.

1. What should matter when someone has rented the same home for decades?
2. What would make a neighbourhood easier to stay in as people grow older?
3. Should a city judge its success by how many people can afford to remain?

9 Role-play: a rent rise

Work in pairs. Read your card, then have the conversation. Swap roles and do it again.

Student A · the landlord

You own a flat and your costs have gone up. You want to raise the rent by 10% from next month. Explain why. You can agree to a smaller rise if the tenant offers a longer contract.

Student B · the tenant

You've lived in your flat for six years and you love the area. Your landlord wants a rent rise that you can't afford. Ask for time and a fair deal, and say what you can offer.

Useful phrases

I'd like to talk about the rent.
I've lived here for six years.
I'm afraid I can't afford that.
Would you consider a smaller rise?
We're willing to sign a longer contract.
That's fair, so let's agree on it.

Tell the class what you agreed and whether both sides were happy.

ANSWER KEY

2 Key words

1 F · 2 C · 3 B · 4 E · 5 D · 6 A · 7 G · 8 H

4 True, false or not given

1 T · 2 F · 3 NG · 4 T · 5 F

5 Vocabulary

1 prolonged · 2 stark · 3 cumulative · 4 interchangeable · 5 attributing · 6 grapple

6 Word forms

1 feasibility · 2 persistent · 3 gentrification · 4 reluctance · 5 simplistic

7 Language focus

1 albeit · 2 Notwithstanding · 3 consequently · 4 thereby · 5 whereby

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